

VIA ALPINA YOUTH HANDBOOK



Methodological guide

Production

This guide is based on work carried out in conjunction with a range of stakeholders and organisations in the Alps. Its content also draws on seminars organised during the programme (2005 to 2007) that resulted in specific output.

The guide has been written by Jean Luc Chautagnat (OXALIS), technical consultant for Via Alpina Youth in France, with the assistance of Gilles Chappaz of the Grande Traversée des Alpes (GTA) association in Grenoble, France and the GTA team.

It is intended for use by individuals and organisations in the Alps seeking to launch or develop innovative, ecological and fun tourism products for young people built around walking.

Editor: Grande Traversée des Alpes association

Translation: Robyn Hackett

Layout: Delphine Martin

Cover photography: Frédéric Isselin

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<http://www.via-alpina.org>

mail@via-alpina.org

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INTRODUCTION

1. THE VIA ALPINA PROJECT: CONNECTING THE ALPS

The Alps are a unique area covering around 200,000 km² and extending over eight European countries: Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, the Principality of Monaco, Switzerland and Slovenia. The Alps are one of the world's top tourist destinations.

The history and culture of the area are fascinating and the mountains have been a vital crossroads for major transport routes over many centuries. Visitors can discover the character of the Alps through an extensive network of local, regional and national paths that are suitable for walkers of all levels.

Based on a proposal put forward by the public-private association *Grande Traversée des Alpes* in the year 2000, government institutions, associations and professional organisations involved in walking tourism in the eight countries have been working to create the Via Alpina. Via Alpina is the first structured network of walking paths linking Trieste and Monaco, with five thousand kilometres (over three thousand miles) of paths extending across the Alps.

Via Alpina has been officially recognised as a practical contribution to implementing the Alpine Convention – a framework agreement that seeks to preserve the ecosystems and promote sustainable development in the Alps. The Alpine Convention was signed in 1991 and takes the view that increasing utilisation by humans could represent a growing threat to the Alps and their ecological functions, and that this threat can only be neutralised by bringing together financial interests and environmental requirements. The Convention recognises the Alps as a single area, an area where the natural world, economy and culture are interwoven and interdependent, and the particularities of which form an identity that requires supranational protection.

However, Via Alpina is also a cooperation project designed to promote the

development of sustainable tourism. The project is built around **walking as a means of discovering all eight Alpine Convention signatory countries.** The project is supported by a broad network of partners and receives cofinancing from the Interreg IIIB Alpine Space Programme in addition to national funding. The Via Alpina project is managed by the *Grande Traversée des Alpes* association, which is responsible for coordinating both national activities in France and international activities.

Via Alpina's objectives

- Contributing to sustainable development in Alpine regions by promoting the development of soft tourism structured around walking.
- Improving relationships and mutual understanding between Alpine countries.
- Helping to raise awareness among Alpine residents of the riches of their cultural and natural heritage and the need to conserve them.

Via Alpina is more than a walking trail: it is a project area designed to encourage networking. It seeks to link up stakeholders and interested parties who want to contribute to achieving these objectives. The trails provide a framework – **a connecting thread as walkers cross the Alps. They form the ideal basis** for structured holidays with organised activities.

The first phase (2001-2004) saw the creation of the five walking trails and infrastructure (maps, signposts, website, partnerships, etc.). In total, all the stages of the walking path make up a year's worth of walks and pass through 40 protected areas and outstanding sites in the Alps.

2. VIA ALPINA AND RAISING AWARENESS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

The guidelines adopted by the International Steering Committee **for the second phase (2005-2007)** focused on ramping up the communication, promotion and awareness-raising activities. *Particular priority was given to projects targeting a younger audience. The aim was to improve young people's awareness of the environment and Alpine heritage as a whole, with a particular focus on the common objectives and issues facing Via Alpina and the Alpine Network of Protected Areas, both of which are direct offshoots of the Alpine Convention.*

As part of the implementation activities developed in France by the French Via Alpina national secretariat, the Via Alpina Youth project has been launched.

The aims of the Via Alpina Youth project

- To develop educational and awareness-raising activities aimed at young people in both formal (school) and informal (leisure activities) settings.
- To focus on activities targeting the relevant professionals: support for awareness-raising activities (creating teaching tools, networking, better recognition, joint products, etc.).
- To build on work done in pilot areas – sites where new methods are trialled for subsequent extension to other areas

Proposed approach

- Freedom to experiment with and test new methods.
- A participatory and cooperative approach based on interactive group work.
- Developing appropriate tools to facilitate teleworking (website).
- Generating synergies with the creation of the national Alpine Mountain Environment Education Network (REEMA).
- Incorporating the international dimension of the Alps.
- Devising new tourism products for young people combining sports, education and/or discovery.

Action

- Establish an activities monitoring group.
- Make an inventory of existing resources (stakeholders, educational tools, interpretation sites) available on the REEMA website.
- Hold co-training sessions and seminars (national and international).
- Produce a methodological guide for activities aimed at young people
- Organise tests and pilot projects on the ground
- Support projects targeting young people (school exchanges, sports and educational trips, events).

3. A METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE TO COMMUNICATION

The Via Alpina Youth Handbook is **the fruit of all the work undertaken in the field between 2005 and 2007**. It is a toolkit for anyone who wishes to develop their activities for young people by incorporating more environmental education and raising awareness about

sustainable development. It constitutes an invitation to continue innovating, to publicise the results and to link up with others.

The methodological guide is designed to provide a framework, guidelines and tools for raising awareness among young people

with regard to this treasure and the need to protect the Alps. Via Alpina is both a network of walking paths and an international sustainable development project intended to support these activities. One of the aims is to move towards soft summer tourism built around walking. Walking is the thread running through all environmental education and sustainable development activities for young people. The interpretation approach is a way of creating a link between young people and the mountains. The approach can take several different forms: site management, long-distance walking tours, discovery walks, nature discovery activities – but all driven by one goal.

This guide is based on the results of various joint seminars organised by Via Alpina Youth and other pilot studies undertaken between 2005 and 2007.

We have looked at young people in general. Some initiatives focus more on a particular age range (teenagers, children, young adults) or a particular situation (school, leisure, groups or individuals). Here we have taken youth activities in the mountains in conjunction with Via Alpina as a whole, with a particular emphasis on cross-cutting approaches and

diversification of activities and reception facilities, so as to highlight useful practices.

The handbook is primarily designed for the following Alpine stakeholders:

- Local authority staff
- Mountain walk leaders
- Accommodation providers
- Managers of accommodation facilities
- Trip organisers
- Association managers
- Staff in the protected areas
- Other mountain professionals
- Teachers
- Organisations linked to Via Alpina

All of the above have a role to play in communication. In more general terms, these are professionals in the areas covered by the trails but also stakeholders who operate in the area and have different educational roles. It is equally valid for operators who would like to incorporate the Via Alpina in their educational products or educational leisure activities.

Key Via Alpina Youth activities 2005-2007

| Date | Type of activity | Main subject | Location¹ | Key partners |
|---------------|---------------------------------|--|--|---|
| May 2005 | <i>Joint seminar</i> | The landscape | Barcelonnette - Ubaye | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even'Ubaye • Community of communes from the Ubaye Valley |
| June 2005 | <i>Experimental workshops</i> | Part of the Mountain Landscapes festival | Barcelonnette - Ubaye | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even'Ubaye • Community of communes from the Ubaye Valley |
| December 2005 | <i>Joint seminar</i> | Ecotourism for young people | Les Carroz d'Araches – Haute Savoie | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASTERS Haute Savoie • RelaiSoleil Grand Massif |
| July 2006 | <i>Experimental workshops</i> | Global warming and walking | Col des Montets – Aiguilles Rouges Natural Reserve | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Espace Mont Blanc • CREA (Alpine Ecosystems Research Centre) |
| Summer 2006 | <i>Youth residential course</i> | "Hands off my mountains" | Chamonix – Le Tour | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FFCAM (French federation of Alpine clubs) |
| October 2006 | <i>Joint seminar</i> | The interpretation approach for young people | Termignon – Haute Maurienne | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vanoise National Park • Sentinelles des Alpes / MDP |
| May 2007 | <i>Youth residential trip</i> | Exchanges between high school pupils from Monaco, France and Italy | Monaco | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAF Monaco |
| June 2007 | <i>Experimental workshops</i> | Rando des copains: part of the Mont Blanc Base Camp event | Passy – Mont Blanc | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passy tourist office • Espace Mont Blanc |
| June 2007 | <i>Joint seminar</i> | Mountains and youth as part of the "Montagne en fête" festival | Serre-Chevalier – Hautes Alpes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCPA • Mountain Riders |
| Summer 2007 | <i>Youth activity holiday</i> | Self-sufficient walking tours | Vanoise and Mercantour | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCPA |
| December 2007 | <i>Joint seminar</i> | Youth cooperation activities involving the Alpine countries | Val d'Aosta – Italy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montagne sûre foundation • EPPM (En passant par la montagne) |

¹ All locations are in the French Alps, except otherwise mentioned.

TERMS OF REFERENCE USED IN THE APPROACH

4. ALPINE ISSUES AND RESOURCES FOR VIA ALPINA YOUTH

4.1. THE ALPS: A UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT

The world's mountainous regions contain a wealth of environmental and cultural resources. They are the source of tremendous **biodiversity** and human **traditions**. They are also very vulnerable environments that are highly sensitive to a whole plethora of natural phenomena and conditions created by human activities. Economic difficulties and the exodus to the valleys have left some mountain areas almost uninhabited, which in turn has environmental consequences.

The **gradients** and **altitude** make it hard to move around and travel becomes dangerous in the winter. This is both an additional problem for wild animals and an opportunity for areas that provide shelter and safety. However, it also means that vegetation takes much longer to recover after intensive land use.

Natural dangers are greater in the mountains and often unpredictable. Mankind has had to adapt to these places. Living areas have become concentrated on the slopes whilst agriculture has chosen flatter areas wherever possible.

A lot of our myths come from the mountains, which are **evocative** places that stimulate the imagination to wild flights of fancy.

The **landscape** and the question of how to preserve it can have ecological implications, but often only financial considerations are taken into account. In some tourist regions changes to the landscape have caused visitor numbers to decline.

The geographical and meteorological particularities have produced unique **ways of life**. Economic survival in an isolated location requires innovation, such as multi-skilling. The valleys are often isolated and each has its own strong identity.

Although the rural lifestyle has been the key formative influence for centuries, over the last 40 years many mountain valleys have been overwhelmed by demand for **"white gold"** (snow). There is now a move to find a happy medium, with mountain areas trying to create a new equilibrium.

The Alpine valleys are home to **conflicting interests**: the desire to travel more freely but preserve the landscape, maintaining the range of facilities in the large ski areas and saving water, preserving biodiversity whilst continuing to equip mountain areas with new facilities, accepting large predators but preserving the high-altitude grazing...

These diverging needs have generated innovative solutions which seek to take all interests into account.

There are a number of possible **responses** to these threats. One overarching priority is *educating* local residents about the *environment and sustainable development* but also those who come to make use of these unique areas.

"The mountains are a place to learn about life, to learn about the qualities that give humans their skills and self-awareness, namely of the fact that they are individuals, living in society with other similar individuals. Consequently there are many situations, many contexts which, when taken to the extreme, can upset the equilibrium. Therefore education is to be seen as a resource, a tool for maintaining that balance, that human dimension." (Joseph Funtim, *environmental educationalist, Cameroon, speaking at the International Festival of Mountain Professionals held in Chambéry in 2002*)

4.2. FROM MASS TOURISM TO ECOTOURISM

A history of mass tourism

Via Alpina has to be seen in the context of the Alpine mass tourism industry which generates a great deal of business activity and has a major impact. The industry is based largely on winter sports.

Tourism in the Alps represents 10% of tourism worldwide, with 370 million overnight stays every year. The myriad passes and valleys contain 4.7 million beds for tourists. Each year, sixty million visitors travel through by various means (roads, walking paths, ski runs).

On average there are 4.6 lifts per 100 km² in the Alps, and the figure is even higher in France: 7.2.

The development of tourism has had a wide-ranging impact on the Alps. The landscapes reflect the changes, which vary from one place to another, depending on the interaction between local populations and tourists.

Environmental impact

- Destruction of certain habitats, overexploitation of others
- Disruption to fauna and flora (disturbances, changes in habits)
- Imbalances caused by water use and deforestation
- Waste and pollution caused by transport

Social impact

- Marginalisation of local populations as a result of intensive and exclusive tourism.
- Greater disparities in land potential are caused by investment (often major) from outside, often by city dwellers.

Economic impact

- Short-term profit is a driving factor.

Cultural impact

- Interaction of different value systems: a meeting of cultures (acculturation).

The good news: a network of protected areas

In parallel with and in response to these effects, just over one-fifth of the total area covered by the Alpine Convention has

protected status, with 424 protected areas (including 14 national parks).

Greater awareness through the development of other forms of tourism

At present, general awareness of the issues is growing. The winter sports resorts are having to face up to the consequences of climate change and are thinking about the future.

Tourism has evolved; it is seeking to limit damage and respond to new demands. Alternatives to mass tourism have seen the emergence of a new set of stakeholders in tandem with different solutions: nature tourism, adventure tourism, soft tourism, community-based tourism management, equitable tourism, sustainable tourism, educational tourism, spiritual tourism, ecotourism – and the list goes on.

Via Alpina aims to facilitate and support this development **by providing a form of soft summer tourism built around walking** in an effort to create sustainable and environmentally-friendly tourism.

"Sustainable tourism meets the needs of the tourists themselves and of the host regions whilst protecting and enhancing future opportunities. It should allow resource management that fulfils economic, social and aesthetic needs, whilst also preserving cultural integrity, vital ecological processes, biological diversity and ecosystems." (FAO - UN)

Ecotourism incorporates the notion of sustainability. It focuses its activities on sensitive and/or protected natural areas. Ecotourism encompasses all forms of tourism that are structured around the natural world and in which the main concern is observing and enjoying the natural world and traditional cultures. Ecotourism is chosen by responsible tourists who want to learn and understand. It therefore incorporates an element of education and interpretation.

Ecotourism seeks to limit damage to the environment, whether natural or sociocultural.

It promotes the conservation of the natural areas that are visited:

- By contributing to existing conservation programmes in the areas
- By improving quality of life for the local population
- By raising awareness of the need to conserve natural and cultural heritage among residents and tourists alike.

Awareness-raising activities and education are essential in order to reinforce and support current developments. Of course, there is a strong emphasis on environmental education in all introductory and ongoing educational activities for the general public and in schools. However, the Alpine and mountain tourism industry should be able to exploit this awareness-raising element and make it an asset. Ecotourism should be integrated at all levels, from planning new facilities to tourism products and local activities.

At the end of the World Conference on Sustainable Tourism (Lanzarote, 1995), the World Charter for Sustainable Tourism was adopted. This declaration provides a full definition of the development of sustainable tourism and sets out the conditions under which this can be done in points 1 and 4: "Tourism development shall be based on criteria of sustainability, which means that it must be ecologically bearable in the long term, as well as economically viable, and ethically and socially equitable for local tourism. [...] As a powerful instrument of development, tourism can and should participate actively in the sustainable development strategy. A requirement of sound management of tourism is that the sustainability of the resources on which it depends must be guaranteed. [...] The active contribution of tourism to sustainable development necessarily presupposes the solidarity, mutual respect and participation of all the actors, both public and private, implicated in the process, and must be based on efficient cooperation mechanisms at all levels: local, national, regional and international."

4.3. THE BENEFITS OF THE VIA ALPINA TRAILS

Via Alpina has a range of assets. It constitutes an effective media portal and showcase for the network of European, national, regional and local walking paths. Via Alpina also contributes to sustainable development. One of Via Alpina's aims is to implement the Alpine Convention by contributing to sustainable development in the regions via the trails. At an international level, Via Alpina provides a starting point for looking at how to incorporate sustainable processes into mountain tourism in the Alps (such as educating the general public, good environmental practices, promoting public transport and supporting traditional farming methods).

Walkers on the Via Alpina are fully immersed in the unique and varied world of the Alps. The primary appeal is the promise of exploring the diversity of this realm: eight countries, with magnificent scenery, local traditions, different cultures,

and different individuals all living unique mountain lifestyles.

The Alpine regions all share these features, but also have their own clear identities.

The main features of the trails are:

- An international network of paths
- A network of paths with a strong Alpine identity
- Accessible paths
- Consisting services
- A contribution to local development
- An outstanding natural environment that is treated with respect
- Structured paths to explore Alpine cultures and traditions
- (NB: *An excerpt from the Via Alpina quality guide, from which these factors have been taken, is included in the Annexes.*)

An international mountain range

In the French Alps, the network of paths only covers a limited distance and small area compared with the whole Via Alpina. However, the trails have a symbolic value that goes beyond geographical considerations: they are the expression of being part of a single area, the Alps.

Thus, in addition to the resources and issues specific to pilot areas, it is vital that we emphasise and convey the concept of an Alpine dimension, with shared historical and cultural references that will speak in different ways both to young people living in the French Alps and to young people outside the region who are interested in the trails because of their studies, hobbies or even because the environmental element of Via Alpina inspires environmental education projects.

The paths in the Via Alpina network pass through eight countries in which the mountain regions have long been shaped by divisions created by national borders and armed conflict. Europe has expanded

and facilitated trade, but the Alpine passes and tunnels have also encouraged movements of cultures and peoples, which in turn creates ecological problems. Dialogue between Alpine inhabitants is enriched by the cultural differences, although the language barrier is still a limiting factor. An interpretation approach has to reflect these specificities.

Our research has enabled us to flesh out the content of the Via Alpina Youth approach. Historical and ethnological knowledge about border regions reveals a rich tapestry of past events, which can contribute to educating the citizens of the future about what the Alpine peoples have in common, irrespective of national borders and periods of armed conflict. These factors bind together the shared history of the Alps and should be brought into play in interpretation tools.

5. VIA ALPINA YOUTH: THE PROCESS OF RAISING AWARENESS

5.1. INTRODUCTION TO EDUCATION ABOUT MOUNTAIN ENVIRONMENT

A holistic educational approach

Environmental education is a holistic educational approach that is not limited to passing on information about the natural world.

The key features are:

- Activities that fit into the long-term perspective
- A decision to work in partnership with all stakeholders thereby ensuring an unbiased approach
- Project-based learning: the students are involved in the educational process, rather than being given factual instruction
- A local approach based on contact with the relevant features
- Awareness of topical local issues
- An approach based on analysis, understanding problems and trying to find appropriate solutions, as opposed to applying predefined rules.

Looking at the complexities of mountain areas

Education about the mountain environment seeks to raise awareness of the complexities of the environments and also the interactions with and between human activities, thereby demonstrating that everyone has a place within an area. The emphasis is on learning to coexist and understanding the different viewpoints.

The Environmental Charter incorporated in the French Constitution alongside the human and citizen's rights dating back to 1789 and the economic and social rights established in 1946 states that everyone has a responsibility:

"Education and training about the environment shall contribute to the exercise of the rights and duties" defined by the Environmental charter (Article 8).

Support for coordinated development projects

Environmental education activities do not only affect visitors to a valley — they also impact residents. Training sessions, meetings and joint projects all have the benefit of bringing together people from different sectors and professions. The subject areas covered extend from designing discovery tools and aids through to support for the creation of interpretation sites designed to encourage interactive approaches.

Mountain professionals may include sustainable development issues in their activities, whether aimed at visitors or their own organisations.

Linking up local projects can challenge the vertical axes of communication: these networks of stakeholders can act as the link between the local area and development plans.

This will of course require sustainable employment, not merely seasonal work, so as to avoid rapid staff turnover. This in turn will require well-structured pluri-activity and statutory innovations. However, these issues fall outside our remit.

Above all, a product-based approach requires a sales pitch that can convince the professionals of the benefits of environmental education. The aim is also to assist in the creation of new, attractive products for the customer.

The interpretation approach has the advantage of offering a joined-up local model that includes training and informing all those involved in the tourism industry. Accommodation providers have a key role to play, as reception and accommodation facilities have considerable educational potential.

5.2. AN ALPINE INTERPRETATION APPROACH

The Via Alpina interpretation approach for young people is built on three elements:

- **the resources of the long-distance walking trails and their surroundings**
- **the guidelines for the action implementation method**
- **suggestions for Alpine-wide themes.**

The general approach falls under the generic heading of "Interpretation". Interpretation means understanding the essence of a place and allowing a link to be formed between the young walker and

his/her surroundings (traditions, natural environment, human activities).

Interpretation is the art of helping visitors to understand the cultural significance and value of a place, whether natural, architectural, historical, cultural, economic or ethnological. (*D. Aldridge and J-P. Bringer*)

Via Alpina Youth offers a range of methodological elements that form the basis for a cross-cutting interpretation approach in the Alps.

Guidelines for the Via Alpina Youth interpretation approach

> An interdisciplinary approach

The interpretation approach looks at natural and historical sites but also the developments and current situation in the Alpine valleys. As a walker follows a trail, they will encounter many different aspects of the landscapes and locations. So every opportunity must be taken to look, to trigger a response, to provide information about the regions as the walker passes through.

There are a whole range of starting points: biology, geography, geology, economics, history, philosophy, sociology, and more.

> Multiple communication methods

All along the Via Alpina trails, and on walking paths in general, the quality of the interpretation builds on low-key facilities on the ground (outdoor information panels that blend into their surroundings), museums (historical and cultural heritage), tourist accommodation facilities (hostels, mountain huts, etc.), the professionals (guides, shepherds, protected area staff, etc.) and the residents.

Each of these facilities and stakeholders also has to adapt to a younger audience –

notably through the communication methods used (choice of equipment, vocabulary, themes, style, etc.).

The range of tools in use is constantly expanding (fixed and movable exhibits, stories, multimedia presentations), as is the variety of approaches (creative, scientific, learning through play, or a combination of all of the above).

> Rooted in the local area

The interpretation approach builds on and highlights the heritage and activities of the local inhabitants. It is important that the tourist operators, especially accommodation providers and staff in accommodation and reception facilities, be included in this local vision through training and information.

> A multi-faceted and structured approach

The mountain valleys are often the scene of tensions between planning, conservation and promotion. Interpretation can be a tool for presenting the options available and their potential impact in an unbiased and transparent manner.

As they walk on the trails, walkers are exposed to the mountain world and have an opportunity to understand how the valleys have developed and the impact of human activities – in some cases, irremediable damage. Sustainable development seeks to establish a balance through dialogue and cooperation. The range of opinions and collective approaches also constitute a useful starting point for developing interpretation tools.

> Mobilising networks

One of the ways in which Via Alpina works is through the creation of networks of stakeholders. Discussions of structure and content help to create a more objective view of one's own activities and allow participants to learn about other people's experiences and take a forward-looking approach. Working in a network

encourages a horizontal approach instead of a top-down model.

In the field of environmental education, cooperation between partners and linking up the different stakeholders encourages greater effectiveness and innovation. In addition, these partnerships ensure consistency within the area and the economy and also improve communication about projects being undertaken at different levels.

Interpretation is the act of giving a meaning to and an explanation for natural or historical phenomena through appropriate experiences, objects and media. This interpretation is designed to stir the visitor, to increase their awareness, and to give them a sense of their place in time and space.

Quebec Conservation Union

5.3. ALPINE THEMES

Which common issues could appeal to young people? How can we create more links between the countries in this field? What common issues are easy for today's young Alpine residents to grasp, irrespective of their nationality?

The Via Alpina Youth interpretation approach builds on horizontal Alpine themes that can impact young people in different Alpine countries.

The themes listed below are proposals put forward by a joint workshop organised as part of the Via Alpina Youth seminar held in December 2007 at St Oyen in the Val d'Aosta (Italy).

> Knowledge of the mountain environment

Physical characteristics, plant and animal species, Alpine ecosystems.

- Discovering the characteristics and particularities that make natural Alpine habitats so valuable

- Looking at iconic species: the successful reintroduction of the bearded vulture; chamois, which are found everywhere and are easy to watch

> *Tools, aids, approaches: natural history books, observation, experiments.*

> The origin of the mountain formations

The formation of the Alps: the origins of the relief and rock types, and the natural hazards that shaped human activities.

The ice ages, particularly the Quaternary Period, whose influence extended well beyond the mountains.

- Explaining the impact on human activities, on why people settled in the valleys, looking at much longer time frames

> *Tools, aids, approaches: geological maps, photographs.*

> Mankind and the mountains

The origins of human settlements in the Alps, links between valleys despite their

inaccessible nature – evidence of Ötzi the Iceman, whose body was discovered in a glacier and who lived 5300 years ago.

Looking at how humans lived and currently live in the Alps, and how they have shaped the landscape. Choices in terms of occupying land and managing the hillsides – both a limitation and source of creativity – the different formats, diversity and the ingenuity of the inhabitants.

- Discovering a living environment that is rich in human terms, observing our immediate surroundings and formulating theories about what the Alpine valleys might have in common
- Observing how local resources (wood, stone) have been used in construction, looking at architectural particularities in each valley

> *Tools, aids, approaches: reading the landscape, meeting local mountain stakeholders.*

> Mountaineering

Mountain peaks are appealing and ask to be climbed. Alpine folklore has been grown up around the mountaineers and their exploits.

- Relating the history of summit ascensions, the history of mountaineering and how our relationship to the mountains has evolved (from superstition to conquest to the concept of zero risk)
- Raising awareness of the characteristics of the mountains (physical, climatic) that influence certain activities: sports, health, concept of risk, independence
- Looking at the reality: the need to take the environment into account, risk-taking, the last area of freedom

> *Tools, aids, approaches: codes of conduct, training, workshops (first aid, map-reading, etc.), mountain school.*

> The mountains as an educational tool

The mountains can help with integration, social mixing and teaching tolerance.

They force us to deal with others when there is no escape route, encouraging a cooperative attitude instead of competition.

Friendliness, the lack of artifice, mountains bring participants together.

Normal hierarchies go out of the window: a simple item such as a glass of water becomes important; relationships between participants when they are taken out of their usual setting.

- Learning how to behave in the mountains, discovering the natural environment, working in the mountain environment to encourage the integration or rehabilitation of problem children.

> *Tools, aids, approaches: walking tours, staying high above the valleys, total immersion, the challenge of climbing a peak as a group.*

> Climate change in the Alps

Global change, biodiversity, climate change, sustainable development – all these topical issues have a slightly different slant in the Alps.

Alternatives to the winter sports industry.

Historical effects viewed in the context of different climatic periods in history.

- Demonstrating that local mountain environments are also affected by global changes; envisaging possible scenarios, encouraging experimentation
- Thinking about development, transport, habitat, consumption and behavioural models in the future (individual and group work)
- Looking at the evolution of natural risk factors in terms of climate change, the seasons and glacier development

> *Tools, aids, approaches: observing developments along the way, old photographs of glaciers.*

> Alpine culture

The importance of travel, the role of peddlers, smuggling, chimney sweepers, private tutors, guides, monasteries (accommodation): openness and travel despite the difficulties involved in crossing the mountains.

The wide range of roots, customs, beliefs and local economic systems that create common factors and differences:

- Mass migrations (e.g. from Barcelonnette in the Ubaye to Mexico), still going on today
 - Social innovation (Republic of the Escartons, Walser communities), pluri-activity, seasonal work
 - Protected areas (regional natural parks, national parks), Alpine Convention, walking routes designed as part of the local development strategy
 - Preponderance of fixed-term contracts, managing the lack of job security
 - The role of refuges in the Alpine valleys for oppressed minorities
- Shared Roman influence: the Alps are Europe's central mountain range
 - Alpine farming as a starting point for looking at cultural elements: cheeses, the land, cuisine, agriculture, pastoral farming and the summer exodus to the high grazing pastures, shepherds
 - Observing how people, plants and animals have adapted to the constraints of the mountain environment (climate and geography)

> Tools, aids, approaches: walking over famous Alpine passes, interviewing the older generation in the villages, reading excerpts in the rest periods.

6. APPLICATION FOR TOURISM OPERATORS

The Via Alpina Youth tourism products need to incorporate three criteria:

- **economic** (local development) and **tourism** (marketing)
- **environmental** (eco-citizens, mountain environment)
- **educational** (environmental education, interpreting the mountain environment)

Promoting a holistic approach to raising awareness of sustainable development in the mountain regions and expanding the number of young people coming into contact with the Via Alpina stakeholders demands constant quality improvements to the range of products. The range must incorporate practices that genuinely respect the environment but also appeal more to young people.

6.1. THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION APPROACH

These basic principles can serve as the basis for devising products and tourist sites for young people.

The Ecologists of the Euzière association (Hérault) gave a presentation at the seminar on this subject held in Haute Maurienne (Savoie) in October 2006.

> Being involved in discovery activities

The **immersion phase**, i.e. **contact with the target audience, is logical**, but it is important to work at it. It is even more important for young people, because their attention and interest have to be engaged. This may also involve physical and sensory contact with the environment.

Environmental education can contribute to personal development (education means "to bring out"). It is therefore possible to alter the perception of a visitor to a particular natural site who has come with specific expectations and to make them **engage with the land** in which they are working, living or holidaying.

The public have to be involved in their voyage of discovery, all the more so in the case of young people, who are less able to deal with abstract concepts. For example, in order to explain the formation of a geological fold to a young audience, one would go to see an actual fold, choosing a suitable route or a striking viewpoint. Alternatively, the forces can be recreated using real objects: pushing a

rug or carpet in a room to observe the effects.

Translating a complex concept into a practical activity **aids understanding** and helps retention².

Young people should not be required simply to accept educational concepts and information, but **should experience the concept themselves** so as to find the solution in their own way.

Consequently **active audience participation is essential**, because an **audience that is part** of an activity is more affected by the experience. In addition, making use of participants' experiences is a key motivating factor: for example, asking students to relate their experiences in the mountains, of nature or of going walking.

² According to American researchers, we retain 10% of material that we read, 20% of material that is read and heard, 30% of visual material, 50% of material that is seen and heard, 70% of what is said, and 90% of what is done.

> Teaching without being boring

Interpretation tools are no longer limited to a single information panel (finding a medium that fits with the landscape, local input). The medium chosen must present a **clear and concise idea** so that people can retain what they read and see. Studies have shown that the panel, **in addition to providing information, has a social function**: people gather around it and discuss the subject matter. Thus the panel can be a **teaching tool** that prompts the reader to ask questions and to develop their **personal interpretation**. Consequently it is useful not to give too much information – it is better to capture people's interest and allow them to **develop their own thoughts and views**. We also know that visitors spend an average of two minutes per panel.

So interpretation cannot be exhaustive. It has to accept that the information is limited, a simplification, but at the same time raises several points that could be pursued in more detail.

In addition, **an interpretation approach provided by an individual** for an audience is irreplaceable. The mountain guide or park warden is the intermediary and the interactive element is vital. Some of the principles described here are equally valid for fixed and mobile exhibits and for activities on the ground.

In the course of a walk, it is useful to arrange meetings with local characters (workers in the high pastures, natural history experts, historians, etc.): involving the different stakeholders in an area makes it possible to maintain objectivity and to explain different points of view.

Portable information aids can also be used while walking to illustrate a particular point.

> Adapting interpretation principles for a younger audience

The principles of interpretation can be adapted for any audience.

The key to the interpretation approach is the objectives, rather than the audience.

If the objectives are the same, it is easier to adapt a method or tool for use with young people.

The term "young people" covers a wide age range, from toddlers to young adults. The context of the activity has to be factored in, in particular whether the young person is in a group or part of a family. In a family group, for example, the interpretation approach has to engage all family members.

The following principles need to be respected:

- Go slow in the reception phase, which is immersion in the environment
- Ensure participation (refer to personal experience)
- Create situations that generate questions and force people to revise their opinions
- Review and update content
- Awaken curiosity, use surprises and unusual elements
- Use a research approach with the participants to build answers gradually
- Identify a connecting thread for the activity or walk
- Encourage contact with different views of the environment
- Avoid a purely scientific approach by using all five senses or creative work
- Ensure local integration
- Give priority to games

Remember that interpretation is meant to be enjoyable.

Style is man's contribution to interpreting the world.

*Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz,
Swiss author*

6.2. SOME INTERPRETATION METHODS AND TOOLS

> Living, interactive sites

One Anglo-Saxon concept used in teaching activities and museums is **systematic provocation**. For example, a sign is affixed next to a display of rocks with the inscription "Please touch". This **engages the viewer**, who comes into direct contact with the objects on display. The concept is provocative because we are far more accustomed to seeing the words "Do not touch".

Another useful technique for interpretation sites or on walking tours is the **door technique**. This involves creating a "door" that opens onto a new place. The door **reveals the essence of a particular place** and allows the audience to understand the **notion of sanctuary**. Using the imagination and stories is particularly important when dealing with younger audiences. For example, to avoid boredom during the walk the guide can stop and tell the group that after a typical tree or rock the path passes through a particular type of landscape, so they need to pay careful attention or look for certain natural features (such as flowers).

An **activities board** displaying the current programme can also provide added value in a particular site or accommodation facility. For example, a slate that is updated daily, weekly or monthly to show the activities planned, the seasonal flora and fauna that can be seen at the site or the management activities in place. This gives a **sense of immediacy**, providing a **snapshot** of what is happening at the site at a given time.

The information required can be supplied by local information systems and updated regularly.

Another possible approach is to encourage an **assessment of the visit** and **track personal experience** by keeping a **comments book** (guest book) in which people can enter what they saw, learned or felt during their visit.

> Use of technology

GPS systems, mobile phones and multifunctional MP3 players all offer **new functionalities for exploring the natural world**.

Pocket digiguides provide information about the environment the walker is passing through and are also a navigational tool. Games functions are a real bonus for children.

A GPS can be used to locate a cultural or natural resource in the area by its coordinates without the aid of signposts, etc. These new communication tools have a special appeal for young people. Should they be included as a teaching tool? Or do they create a distance between the visitor and the environment they are exploring? Further tests are needed in this field.

> Young people create their own interpretation tools

Environmental education projects will have a greater impact if the **participants are enthusiastic**. In addition to pure awareness-raising or teaching young people about the issues in the mountain environment, the emphasis given to **practical activities** within the project is crucial. This may involve conservation or changing a particular location (clean-up, planting), submitting structured arguments to decision-makers (environmental white paper), or producing communication tools (panels, guides, audiovisual material). In terms of the education project, the instructor or teacher must ensure that the **project is built with the young people** by using appropriate methods and that the students do not simply execute a plan or serve to highlight an action.

> The landscape as a starting point

The interpretation of a site is rooted in the landscape – understanding the landscape and its evolution.

Here are a few techniques for connecting with a landscape:

- Expressing the feelings inspired by the landscape

- Writing a postcard to a friend
- Describing how this place is different
- Telling the tale that is unfolding in the landscape before our eyes
- In pairs: one describes the landscape, the other draws it
- Identifying things that are less than 50 years old in the landscape
- Drawing a landscape with five strokes then explaining the picture
- Drawing what can be seen through a frame then mixing up the pictures and finding the frame

6.3. PREPARATION HELPS

Checklist for preparing for a teaching session or interpretation site

This checklist is designed to help you prepare an interpretation session with an audience, either with or without local aids.

List

Identify on a map and list:

- Landscape: all heritage features, major and minor
- Human resources: eye-witness accounts, surveys, anecdotes
- Documents: old photographs, books

Interpretation

- Theme: choose a central theme – water, wind, agriculture, botany, how the landscape has evolved, etc.
- Connecting thread: guides the visitor's thinking and learning – a marmot's tale, a grandfather talking to his grandson, imagination, the weather, ideas in music, literature and film.
- Message: this is what you want the visitor to remember – up to four key words or simple sentences.
- Style: educational, playful, spoken, drama, mime, photographic evidence, sense of place, tales, questions, stimuli, beauty.
- Find an appropriate and appealing title.

Practicalities

- General organisation, walking routes, breaks, timing, speed

Choice of medium

- Instructor
- Guidebook with maps
- Fixed or portable information boards
- Teaching tools
- Artwork
- Audio material

Evaluation

- Produce trial material and test it on a volunteer
- Apply the site evaluation criteria before doing the actual interpretation
- Questionnaire on general behaviour

→ Remember: always try to involve local residents in the project (their views and suggestions)

Interpretation study

This could be a study on how to manage a site or an activity to be set up involving several speakers.

The aim:

- Create consensus about the project
- Plan the broad outline and implementation, produce estimate of costs
- Obtain quotes
- Apply for funding

Method:

- Short time frame (4-5 days)
- Set up a working group
- Assess the next steps

Content:

Define :

1. The stakeholders and their role: project leader, contractor, supervisor, steering committee, manager, supplier, subcontractors

2. Objectives: economic, social, cultural and educational

3. Target audience

4. Limiting factors: social customs, regulations, landowners, rival projects

5. Content: managing the audience, themes, connecting thread, tools, costs

6. Optional budget

7. Schedule and budget: staff, activities, maintenance

8. Timetable, continuity

6.4. VIA ALPINA YOUTH RECOMMENDATIONS

To guarantee consistency in the implementation of Via Alpina Youth activities, we have drawn up a set of practical recommendations for activity providers and trip organisers. Rather than creating a distinct brand, our aim is to encourage everyone to develop their own activities whilst recognising that they are part of a broader approach.

Recommendations to supplement existing brands

Different brands and labels already exist and are mutually compatible. For example, the European Union's eco-label (a flower logo) for tourist accommodation (www.eco-label.com) sets a number of conditions that are linked to sustainable development:

- Limited energy consumption
- Limited water use
- Reduction in waste produced
- Encourages the use of renewable resources and less environmentally-harmful products
- Promotes communication and environmental education

More akin to Via Alpina, albeit not specific to the mountains, is the **Panda label** for rural gites (huts or inns), which refers to the accommodation quality and the activities on offer.

The owner of a Panda gite undertakes to conserve outstanding natural resources on the property or to work to protect resources in the surrounding area. The commitment is made in an agreement linking the owner to the WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) and the regional or national park where the gite is located. In addition, the owner of the Panda gite must be able to inform visitors about the options for walking and watching the wildlife in the region: circular walks, natural reserves, protected areas, etc.

The WWF has awarded the Panda label to around 300 gites in France, which are

located in 31 regional parks, three national parks and a few outstanding natural sites. Each gite provides certain equipment: an education pack containing guides for identifying local flora and fauna, several pairs of binoculars, documents and maps relating to the regional nature park or national park, local and regional maps, information brochures on the local wildlife and how to learn more about it.

*The Via Alpina **Quality Guide** defines a number of criteria to be met by operators who wish to cite Via Alpina in their walking-based marketing.*

However, in view of the national differences and strong variations even at local level, there is a horizontal approach to quality that seeks to build on existing programmes rather than creating a Via Alpina standard based on a checklist of separate requirements to be met by all applicants. It would be almost impossible to monitor any such standards effectively on all the Via Alpina trails, given the resources available.

The criteria establish the minimum requirements and also define the ideal standards. Thus rather than creating a label, there is a focus on promotion.

There are additional quality requirements for providers targeting a younger audience.

Trails

Extracts from Via Alpina Recommendations

Local projects to install information panels (or provide documents in several languages) at sites of particular interest are already in place.

The trail allows all Via Alpina users to explore the Alps and the local traditions and heritage. Guided discovery walks are on offer in each zone with documents and/or information panels in several languages.

Via Alpina Youth Recommendations

Information suitable for a younger audience (children and teenagers) is available: attractive format, no prior knowledge required to assimilate information, fun elements, hooks. Guided discovery walks are organised specifically for young people with appropriate educational techniques (playful, sensory, imagination, involvement): these walks are suitable for families with children of different ages...

Safety and paths

Extracts from Via Alpina Recommendations

There are no dangers on the path and it does not involve any significant technical difficulties. Each day walk comprises no more than 5% of tarmac and 10% on managed tracks.

Wherever possible, the trail avoids rocky and uneven paths, and technical solutions are used to dry out the ground if necessary. The path is built using local materials and blends into the landscape. The paint and materials used for signposts are environmentally-friendly, and so is the preparatory work.

Via Alpina Youth Recommendations

Accessible to encourage use by young people. Some sections are specifically designed for use by young people. Special guides are produced. On long-distance routes, one section of the trail are designated for use with young people and linked to circular walks.

Ecological trails (integration, material, maintenance, using old trails) are planned by way of an introduction for schoolchildren.

Groups of young people are involved in maintaining the trails as part of outdoor workshops

The path's environment

Extracts from Via Alpina Recommendations

The path must provide an introduction to the biodiversity found in the different Alpine ranges and at different altitudes. It passes through selected protected areas (natural parks and reserves) that are home to iconic Alpine species. Crowded zones and sanctuaries are avoided. Where these places cannot be avoided, strict rules apply. In addition, the long-distance trail does not entail the creation of new, intrusive facilities.

Via Alpina Youth Recommendations

The access conditions for natural areas are publicised. If bivouacs are allowed, they will be arranged close to mountain huts, in compliance with the rules.

A green mountain walker's code of conduct based on existing programmes is available. Educational activities promoting biodiversity are available.

Information

Extracts from Via Alpina Recommendations

Information about different products on offer (guided visits, discovery exhibitions and tours, events, etc.) is available. The information includes basic information about sites of interest, the wildlife, history and culture. The information also includes website addresses and a bibliography.

Via Alpina Youth Recommendations

There are plans to produce a catalogue of the documents available that are designed for young people. A special website is available, using interactive features with the option of publishing photographs and films, a blog engine and articles with comments by users.

Transport

Extracts from Via Alpina Recommendations

There is a link between the Via Alpina and the public transport networks at least once every five days (trains, coaches).

Via Alpina Youth Recommendations

Car-free options for accessing the paths have been developed and identified, at affordable youth rates.

Supplies on the trail

Extracts from Via Alpina Recommendations

Wherever possible, the facility will use good quality local ingredients in the meals. The whole catering process must be environmentally-friendly (supplies, cooking, packaging, waste).

Via Alpina Youth Recommendations

Picnics or meals suitable for young people are provided, with an emphasis on presentation.

On the trails, snacks are obtained from the mountain huts or at farms. Awareness of and interest in local and organic produce is developed gradually. The origins of the food provided are made clear.

Accommodation

Extracts from Via Alpina Recommendations

The establishment will adopt sustainable practices that are compatible with the surrounding area (no noise, smells or visual pollution). The establishment has been awarded the European eco-label for accommodation.

Via Alpina youth Recommendations

Sustainable practices used in the accommodation facilities are highlighted and explained: these are primary material for raising awareness.

The young visitors are involved in sorting waste, limiting use of heating and water, etc.

The accommodation is the contact point for relaying local and environmental information.

The staff are also involved.

Activities

Extracts from Via Alpina Recommendations

The manager of the establishment has contacts among mountain activities professionals who offer supervised outdoor activities.

Via Alpina Youth Recommendations

Training activities are available for the site managers and mountain professionals to help them to develop activities for young people.

Direct contact and oral accounts are preferable to written documents.

Organised trips

Extracts from Via Alpina Recommendations

When setting up organised trips, priority is given to a certain number of conditions that also apply to trips designed for young people.

Via Alpina Youth Recommendations

The features of a Via Alpina holiday must be considered when planning trips and the different stakeholders and customers should be involved. All stakeholders should agree on and create a consistent approach.

Different solutions are devised and publicised for different types of trip (school, leisure, group holiday centres).

Internal practices

Extracts from Via Alpina Recommendations

The Via Alpina facility respects the environment.

Energy efficiency is considered in planning and when travelling for professional reasons.

Minimising waste and energy efficiency are considered when producing and distributing documents and other materials.

Target objectives

The Via Alpina offices are well-insulated so as to limit energy losses. Rubbish is sorted and recycled (paper, cardboard, glass, plastic, ink cartridges, etc.), renewable energies used and (wherever possible) low-energy products are used (light bulbs, taps, thermostats, etc.) and products with an eco-label.

The Via Alpina organisation complies with the standard quality requirements for organisational management.

Via Alpina Youth Recommendations

The various stakeholders in Via Alpina Youth will gradually incorporate these recommendations into their own organisations: young people are very sensitive about practising what is preached.

Encouraging and including local stakeholders

Extracts from Via Alpina recommendations

The Via Alpina organisation consults its partners as often as possible, develops tools and regularly organised events to motivate its partners (clubs, networks, challenges, discussions) in accordance with the Quality Guide.

Via Alpina Youth Recommendations

The implementation of Via Alpina Youth activities is based on working as part of a network and in partnership.

7. OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

7.1. STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

This analysis is based on the work by a panel of Alpine stakeholders as part of the Via Alpina Youth seminar held in June 2007 at Serre-Chevalier (Hautes-Alpes). It identifies key concepts for planning future activities.

Young people and walking

Accessibility

The mountain walking available in the Alps has a number of advantages. Walking is accessible to everyone provided the routes are carefully chosen. The walking areas are close to Alpine towns and train connections are being developed in conjunction along the main axes. Unlike more technically-demanding activities (canyoning, kayaking, mountaineering), walking is a low-cost activity, requiring little equipment and no prior knowledge.

However, mountain walking leaders do not have a very high profile. Unlike skiing and mountaineering, walking does not necessarily have to be learned from a professional instructors. Walking as an activity also gives young people less of an ego boost.

Sleeping in the mountains

Camping is often an option on walking tours and is a cheap form of accommodation with no need to book ahead. However, campsites are evolving and now offer far more amenities, which is pushing up the costs for young people.

The multitude of huts in the Alps means it is possible to plan walking tours with short stages. The huts are the ideal place for developing a sociable atmosphere. They bring together the members of the group, making it easier to create the convivial atmosphere that appeals to young people. Official bivouac sites need to be developed close to the huts wherever possible (park regulations, pollution).

Walking is losing ground among young people

The image of walking in the mountains has become blurred, what with traditional portrayals of the hiker with leather walking boots and a steel-tipped walking stick and the current image of trail runners in running gear. Among young people, walking is increasingly perceived as an activity for the retired and elderly. They feel that the mountains are still better equipped and promoted for winter sports.

The current product range

Young people in the mountains

It is hard to pin down what teenagers expect and detailed knowledge is required in order to plan suitable activities. There are not many activities aimed at this age bracket.

It is hard to monitor developments in informal arrangements. Young people do exercise, but their activities do not fall within the standard and quantifiable categories.

The key factor that attracts young people to walking is the independence it offers and inspires (e.g. walking tours carrying everything in a rucksack). Young people need to feel independent, although they tend to want to stay within a fairly safe environment. They need their views and specific needs to be recognised.

The proportion of pensioners is on the increase

The ageing population has prompted tourism professionals to work harder to attract this group (22% of the French population is over 60). Businesses prefer to focus on the older age bracket because of their greater purchasing power. It is hard for different age groups to share accommodation facilities. There are not many multigenerational products on offer.

All too often, walking activities tend to focus on pensioners. The FFRP (French walking federation) has 180,000 members, which indicates that walking has become much more popular, but the majority of members fall within the older age brackets. Financial considerations means that the majority of investment in Alpine tourism products tends to focus on the older audience.

A quality educational product range

For the last 30 years, mountain environmental education professionals have been developing products that are not well-known or marketed, but that do offer a great wealth of educational models. There are not enough agents promoting and marketing the educational trips on offer (leisure and school trips). All too often, the educational element is seen as being in conflict with the need for a strong marketing product.

The stakeholders and the professionals

Active and responsive professionals

Mountain professionals are willing to pull together in the face of economic difficulties and the need to develop their activities, particularly those aimed at young people. They are opting to teach themselves because of the lack of appropriate training courses.

The existence of a large numbers of mountain walking leaders on the ground who are increasingly focussing their skills on active environmental discovery is a real bonus. The leaders have to write a dissertation as part of their initial training and this is a key factor in their receptiveness to new ideas and their ability to look at their activities objectively.

Fragmentation of youth stakeholders

The creation of stakeholder networks can be crucial, as it promotes exchanges of information about successful activities that already exist in the area. However, the sectoral nature of organisations (by industry or by location) limits the potential for cross-contamination.

It is hard to identify all the organisations that focus on the youth audience. The specialists are spread throughout different sectors: sports, schools, tourism, and community education. The lack of coordination limits effectiveness across the board.

It is hard to provide youth products that are financially viable. Pricing limits the number of products available to and for young people.

Schools: a key factor

The school system is well-structured: the customers are known. Holiday and activity centres are mainly managed by the social tourism and community education sectors, both of which are well organised.

Schoolchildren learn about walking as part of their physical education lessons.

Sustainable development

Environmental values on the up

The environment, health and wellbeing are now priorities, including among young people, and all of them fit in well with mountain walking. Sustainable development is a topical issue and general awareness of the subject is improving. The subject is now a compulsory part of the school curriculum.

Walking has a low ecological impact, particularly since walking areas can often be accessed using trains and buses.

The impacts of climate change

Climate change has highlighted the "freshness" of the mountains. It has also increased natural dangers: scorching temperatures, forest fires, rock and serac falls. There are also implications for traffic volumes.

Sport and the environment

Walking as a form of exercise (or outdoor pursuits in general) and environmental education can be complementary. Mountain environmental education activities are often too static: they could be enriched and revitalised by including some walking tours. However, sporting activity requires the presence of another instructor – and therefore additional costs – which may limit development.

Structural factors

Regulatory limits

The French law of March 2007 authorising minors in mountain huts has opened up a number of possibilities. However, the regulatory framework laid down by the French Ministry for Youth and Sports in relation to the organisation of trips for young people is still a limiting factor. The hygiene and supervision requirements are not commensurate with the nature of walking tours.

The mountain counterculture

The Alpine playground offers a whole host of activity options. The beauty and purity of the landscapes create wide open spaces. However, the wild and the natural world also engender fear, particularly among young people who have always lived in cities.

Our society's focus on eliminating risk and culture of requiring that all leisure activities be totally safe runs counter to the realities on the ground (mountains can be deadly, even when

treated with respect) and the spirit of adventure that makes it worthwhile. The mountains are above all unpredictable, difficult and challenging.

Active fashion

Sports brands invest heavily in the mountains and mountain sports, which provides a direct point of connection with young people. Advertising images make use of mountains (e.g. pop-up tents). Prominent sporting events are gradually changing the image of the mountains and mountain sportsmen and women.

Support from the authorities

Public support policies are becoming more consistent and increasingly factor in the need to provide better facilities for young people in the mountains so as to allow them to learn about the environment and the sports on offer.

The Alps are often absent from marketing

Few of the products targeting young people focus on the Alps. The products tend to be specific to a mountain range or the main valleys. Via Alpina could be a means of deriving greater benefit from the Alps as a strong brand.

7.2. NEW APPROACHES

> City walking as a first step

It would be useful to start where the young people are: most of them are city dwellers. City life feeds the need to see the natural world.

New York City, for example, organises an urban challenge, while a discovery rally in Paris weaves between famous monuments. If the different forms of **walking are now winning back the cities**, it will be easier to make the transition to the mountains. Increased use of public transport also encourages walking. This is also true for young children, with schemes such as the *Pédibus* (organised crocodiles to walk to school) being set up as part of ecological policy in certain towns.

Urban products can also serve as a springboard for moving to the mountains, for example, by **introducing city walking circuits**.

> Rebranding walking

How can we set ourselves apart from the sea and snowboarding products that seem to capture teenagers' imaginations? Walking tours can serve as a medium.

We need to work on design and communication to create a **stronger image for the mountains and walking**.

The mountains are still a mythical place that capture the imagination. They are associated with the snow kingdom of winter sports. Yet walking is an easy way for everyone to enjoy that kingdom.

The adventurous side of walking is attractive. However, the weight of a rucksack carrying everything one needs soon becomes a limiting factor. Adventure is great, but it needs to be lightweight! It is also becoming harder to organise young people to carry food and cook it in the huts.

The equipment has both a symbolic and practical function. For example, carrying an ice-axe on your rucksack gives an Alpine feel, even if it is never used. It is a way of getting into the spirit of the thing.

For young people who have not been exposed to this world from an early age, mountains are still fairly inaccessible. **Different levels** are needed to cater for **novices**.

> New and successful practices

Technological advances are constantly improving equipment performance, which is itself an attraction. However, equipment can also be a barrier for the less well-off.

Trail running has breathed new life into walking. Trail running combines running and the mountains and encourages participants to run downhill, unlike more traditional walking. Organised races incorporate environmental considerations (e.g. race t-shirts made of organic cotton). Large-scale events are organised with new stars emerging who act as a driving force for the activity as a whole.

Trail running also brings people to the locality – 1,200 runners came to Serre-Chevalier for the Trail des Cerces event. Running along a path is more fun than walking. However, a certain standard is required and there is a danger that those who are not as talented or have not trained enough will become disenchanting while others become elitist. Trail running can provide a different angle on walking in the mountains. Often young people are happy just to know that they are out trail running, rather than needing to enter an event. Consequently junior trail running focuses more on discovery than on performance goals. It is a form of environmental education through low-impact sporting activity (as long as people don't cut corners and take the train!).

Other exercise forms are also becoming popular, such as **Nordic walking**.

Walking is an excellent way of linking outdoor activity sites (e.g. via ferrata) and exploring the Alpine heritage and environment. The shepherds and their work are another must-see item.

> Get the look!

Clothing is an important part of image. Outdoor clothes are now standard city wear. Technical clothing is used in day-to-day life. Brand names are developing lifestyle products (sportswear) by reinvesting in **colours and materials found in the mountains**.

The clothes that make up this look stimulate the imagination. They are one way of modernising walking as an activity,

without necessarily changing the content and values. In addition, manufacturers such as Patagonia are developing model practices that focus on sustainable development. Once again, however, these products are not always affordable.

The manufacturers hold the key to new and future activities. They help to shape consumer choices, particularly among young people who like brand names. What is needed is an improved, more dynamic image of the mountains, largely built around the snowboarding scene and reviving interest in exploring the untamed mountains. The idea is to move away from a culture of blame and moralising with the emphasis on exercise alone and ensure an evolution of the **traditional Alpine values** instead.

> New technologies

Geocaching is an outdoor treasure hunt. It uses GPS (Global Positioning System) technology: with the help of a handheld GPS device, geocachers comb the countryside in search of mysterious treasures hidden in geocaches. **This is basically walking AND having fun** (for

more information see www.geocaching.com).

It could also give rise to the creation of **video games based in the mountains**. This is effectively reworking the basic image of the mountains and walking using modern resources.

> Obesity warnings

All around the world, young people's physical capabilities are declining. According to international definitions, 18% of young people in France are now overweight, of whom around 3% classify as obese. This means it is getting harder to organise high-intensity physical activities. Activities need to reflect participants' physical fitness.

That said, going walking can address concerns about young people's health. In the first half of the 20th century, certain contagious diseases such as tuberculosis were treated in mountain locations. Nowadays the mountains provide an inexhaustible supply of physical activities that promote health and wellbeing.

7.3. PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

Walking tours and hiking

Fresh air, Alpine culture, the great outdoors

- Creating **educational** paths **with numbered stopping points** in conjunction with schoolchildren to make them aware of the work involved in creating and maintaining a path (a guidebook showing the numbered stopping points will provide information without requiring any intrusive installations in the landscape)
- Meeting with **local young people who can show other visiting youngsters around their area**
- Teaching young people to talk about their local area, to think about how it evolved and identify interesting features. How do you learn to talk about the landscape? How do you communicate about landscape? Or make it accessible to others?
- Change the time spent walking: discovering the appeal of staying in one place for longer
- Listen to young people: going beyond the awareness phase and moving on to **taking action and expressing their opinions** as eco-citizens
- Working **in conjunction** with walking leaders and hut guardians
- Installing audio points or printing eye-witness accounts from local residents past and present
- Emphasising the **physical challenge of walking** to motivate the young people
- Introducing to the creation paths (technical approach): choosing the route, maintenance, work, usage, etc.

Sustainable development

Raising awareness of Alpine environmental issues: setting up programmes (land use and maintenance, roads and transport, resource management, impact of climate change, preserving biodiversity).

- Immersion phase: walking tours in several locations, raising awareness, engaging with the land, understanding the different land management options and their impact
- Via Alpina treasure hunt with question sheet and prizes to be won, or games to be used in accommodation facilities en route
- Exploiting the appeal of the **international factor** to raise environmental awareness
- **Challenging activities** on the issue of water shortages. For example, stopping the hut users using water for a short time to prompt discussions. (When will the hut's water supply run out? How can we avoid wasting water?) This activity could also be used for electricity or waste (e.g. place a huge dustbin in the middle of a natural site)
- Developing EEDD projects (environmental education for sustainable development – a French national initiative) that can be used during Via Alpina Youth trips: interpretation trail, discovery journal
- Suggesting **walks that depart from and end at train stations** (promoting public transport)
- Creating a blog that will allow all participants to post their photographs and comments about Via Alpina
- Producing sculptures on the subject of waste produced by the huts in conjunction with a local artists

The Alps

Common problems, receptiveness to different cultures, **a local slant in a global location**, the Alpine identity, an interdisciplinary view (flora, fauna, history, geology), and the question of national borders.

- Importance of identifying a **connecting thread**
- Visual aid: the yoyo. Going from the global to the specific and looking at different points in space and time
- Telescope and microscope: explaining the specific in a global context
- Role plays
- Using a range of maps and aerial photographs
- Identifying activities that can be used in different Alpine areas
- Installing webcams in huts
- Working with and bringing together stakeholders across the Alps: building on existing resources and activities.

Environmental Education, because of the subject matter - the relationship between the environment and society - is closely linked with other aspects of contemporary education, particularly consumer education, health, safety, demography, development, peace and human rights education.

World Citizens Assembly

ACTIVITIES ON THE GROUND

8. PROJECTS FACTSHEETS

8.1. LANDSCAPE DVD

Example of an interactive DVD using a systematic approach to a landscape "The rural trail" (J. Ritter et al., 2004)

The images on this DVD take the viewer through a rural environment (Prapic, Hautes Alpes) and observe the scenery. This tool is firmly based on an interdisciplinary approach. Three different perspectives combine to provide keys to understanding rural activities in the mountains: the farmer, focusing on the work of the shepherd and livestock farmer; the botanist, looking at plant diversity and the ability of plants to adapt to any ecological conditions; and the geologist, who concentrates on rocks and how the mountain formations were created.

A shepherd links these perspectives as he talks about his work.

The "rural trail" is designed for research and teaching, for professionals, specialists and walkers, and in more general terms, for anyone interested in the mountain environment and its development. It was created by three ecology researchers: Jean-Pierre Deffontaines, Jean Ritter and Benoît Deffontaines. It is a useful tool in terms of content but also because of the format and interactive elements. An explanatory booklet is also provided.

The trail can help to prepare for or expand upon a trip to the mountains with young people and can be adapted for different audiences (different levels).

The DVD includes interactive interpretation tools that can be adapted for different landscapes to complement the approach used locally. For example, a walk leader could offer to produce a short DVD during a trip to the mountains. Discovering the mountains can also provide an opportunity to explain your own understanding of the landscape to others.

The authors' perspective

"In addition to exploring the issues in terms of land and sustainable development, villages and high pastures, the DVD highlights research and training issues.

In doing so, it seeks to promote a visual approach to learning by suggesting ways of moving from the visual to practical considerations. In examining the views of the expert and the researcher, we are seeking to contribute to learning through observation.

At the same time, the DVD also seeks to show the benefits and limits of combining knowledge to analyse a complex subject – in this case activities in a particular area. This is an interdisciplinary approach.

The DVD is suitable for three types of audience:

- Agricultural workers, livestock farmers and shepherds, whose roles have changed.
- Mountain professionals, park wardens, associations and walking leaders, whose work requires a more detailed understanding of agriculture and livestock farming.
- All users, walkers and outdoor sportsmen and women, particularly those for whom an understanding of the land through which they move is essential in order to respect the local areas and customs."

Some questions are raised in this work that could usefully be developed in other Alpine areas or for other themes:

- Can multimedia technologies contribute to an interpretation approach for the mountain environment?
- How can we encourage the creation of audiovisual material by young people for young people?
- How can these DVDs be made available to tourism professionals? How can these tools best be used in products, particularly educational projects?
- What partnerships need to be created in this field, and with whom?

8.2. FESTIVAL OF MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPES, UBAYE

An original and inspirational event

The idea started with a group meeting held prior to the festival (circle of environmental, tourism and other professionals) to consider what to do in the Ubaye valley to mark the International Year of Mountains. The notion of landscape soon emerged from the informal discussion, inspired by the variety of scenery locally. The landscape has mainly remained unchanged. Another concern was to involve as many local stakeholders as possible. A call for tenders was launched and open to all residents entitled "What have you got to say about the mountain landscape?".

The landscape is all-inclusive: everyone can see it, it is a unifying concept. Everyone has something to add, with new, unexpected encounters between individuals with different perspectives. The subject strikes a chord with mountain lovers and the general public alike. Even Ubaye was reformed as an association in order to provide organisational assistance. The association headed up the network, with around a dozen individuals who had been enthusiastic about championing the concept from the outset.

Essentially, the festival uses an association model built on volunteer support (the event is therefore only held every other year).

A wealth of activities are organised over the four days: games and open events, celebrations in unusual locations, guided walks, a land-art workshop on occupying space and bringing it to life, content providers, long walks, ambles, debates, taking time, looking around. The programme is made up of activities proposed by local volunteers who want to share their experience, their activity, their point of view and their expertise.

The local inhabitants (both permanent and seasonal) are involved. They are valued for their ability to share local knowledge with the tourists.

The festival is also a testing ground for new products and innovations. It is a model of soft tourism, with participant numbers limited for each activity in order to maintain quality. More important than financial gains is the fact that the event improves the valley's image. It is then up to the local area to build on that image in the longer term.

However it is important to evaluate the festival in more detail, so as to ensure its survival. What is the long-term impact? What continues after the festival? What has improved locally? Preparations need to be made in advance so as to increase the event's long-term impact, including deciding what sort of participant review will be undertaken.

How can activities be developed based on the festival experience? It is apparent that support from local stakeholders (external support in order to structure the activities and ensure quality) is vital. Consequently, it might be possible to organise short training sessions or courses on talking about the Ubaye, environmental education, the teenage audience and so forth.

The festival and young people

The festival is more a cultural than a sporting event: it has little appeal for young people. However, a landscape event could also attract the younger audience if other activities were included. The suggestions listed below could also be used for other types of event.

> Activities targeting teenagers

- Provide more music, sport and creative input for teenagers
- Offer unusual outdoor activities: looking for contradictions, the unexpected and adventure
- Visit unusual places (mountain biking tunnels, etc.), organise overnight bivouacs, set up Tyrolean traverses and abseils.

- Organise role-playing activities, treasure hunts, map-reading workshops
- Bring together samba groups
- Develop activities based on the relationship between customs officers and smugglers
- Use sounds and music to learn about geology and other subjects
- Organise youth camps with theatre companies exploring the imagination, re-enacting legends (a type of role play in conjunction with outdoor activities)

> Creating links between young people and their surroundings

The local youth can help young visitors to discover the area using multimedia tools: young people can present their landscape in a short film (there is a youth film-making club in the Ubaye) to young people locally, to the festival visitors, and to Italians in neighbouring valleys.

> Youth participation upstream

Involving young people in the early stages of the event can be a great source of motivation: ask young people to devise activities based on their expectations, make sure they are committed to activities, ensure they are involved early on, make them responsible for an activity (with support from a committed adult), provide scope for spontaneity and sparking ideas.

A young people's group could also be incorporated in the organisation to plan youth welcome activities at the festival.

> Exchanges between young people from France and Italy (seeing things differently)

Doing a walk that passes through Italy following a historical route. Meetings between French and Italian young people on a heritage trail, incorporating encounters with local people who remember local events. This appeals to young people because it is real (for example, people's memories of smuggling). Instead of classroom teaching, the children learn as they walk; this fits in with the local cultural project of rediscovering the memories of Italian immigrants.

Wider links with young valley dwellers (sixth form)

The Festival could be a vehicle for promoting youth education projects during the year (plans need to be made at the beginning of the school year in conjunction with teachers). Potential for adding value to the projects through a label and financial support. An opportunity to involve the local educational sector from the outset (teachers, instructors): try to avoid excessive focus on tourists, which could put teachers off – convince them of the educational benefits.

Emphasis on photographs

- Teenagers' views of the mountain presented via photographs and films is one way of expressing their perception of the environment.
- Identifying locations in the landscape from photographs. Treasure hunt organised by young people. Photo journal of the Via Alpina tour with comments. Identifying today's landscape from old postcards.
- Using old photographs: hiding them at certain sites, identifying changes and developments in the landscape, asking people to give presentations based on the photographs, and then giving local background information.
- Predicting the future of the Alps from young people's words
- Organising a photography or photo montage competition along the Via Alpina trails (along the lines of the Post'Alpes competition) on the theme of the journey. The entries could then be used in a travelling exhibition. Publicising the artwork among young people in all eight Alpine countries and getting them to promote the activity.

> Developing trips

The Festival could also be an opportunity to promote activity holidays for young people in the area: environmental field trips for schoolchildren, discovery holidays for town dwellers, youth residential courses, environmental education programmes. These should be publicised in advance, calling for registrations and helpers.

8.3. FRENCH ALPIN CLUB (FFCAM) YOUTH HOLIDAYS

Basic principles

In conjunction with the mountain conservation committee of FFCAM³, in 2005 Via Alpina had the idea of offering the younger members of the local clubs a five-day activity holiday in the Le Tour Alpine centre in the Chamonix valley, close to the Franco-Swiss border. The activities proposed were suitable for the youth age bracket, but also gave a sense of discovering the mountain, all under the umbrella of the Via Alpina walking tour as an international concept. There was also an opportunity for the young people to give feedback on and evaluate the trip (newspaper articles, films, etc.).

Objectives

For Via Alpina Youth:

- To experiment with and exploit features of quality methods and processes in order to develop this type of youth holiday around the Via Alpina.

For FFCAM:

- To make young FFCAM members aware of the environmental issues in the mountain environment
- To make this a long-term programme and developing the international element
- To establish a partnership model and open up the federation

Theme –connecting thread

The high mountains and the environment

Benefits:

- Consistency with FFCAM's positioning and identity in this environment (high-altitude sports), offering activities that young people will not be able to try in discovery class lessons (e.g. mid-altitude).
- Specific starting point (less of a catch-all than "mountains" in general), connecting thread clarifies the purpose of the trip.
- General themes can be addressed, such as mountains (human activities, natural habitats, species, ski resorts, global warming, transport), but making the link with the high mountains (e.g. effect of valley pollution on the glaciers, "montagne à l'état pur" (unspoiled mountains) campaign).

Publicity material for the "Hands off my mountains" trip⁴

You want to travel through them, but you also want to understand. The mountains are fragile and under threat, and you too can help to protect them. We need you. You are over 12 years old and want to explore the high mountains together with other French, Italian and Swiss young people, meet famous guides, the hut guardians, mountain professionals and mountain-lovers. By asking them questions, looking at the effects of human activities and climate change as we walk, we will work together to devise and create actions and activities to encourage all mountain users to show more respect. You can do your bit under the slogan "Hands off my mountains". Come along to the course to be held at the Le Tour chalet in Chamonix on the Via Alpina walking trail.

³ French Federation of Alpine clubs, formerly known as the French Alpine Club (CAF).

⁴ Appeared in the Spring 2005 issue of *Montagnes Infos*, the FFCAM's activity magazine.

Review of the campaign

It is hard to reach the younger age bracket within the FFCAM with these activities: young people tend to start learning the skills with their parents. The FFCAM culture of non-paying participants (parents, supervisors) made it hard to find people who are willing to pay for the holiday.

The potential applicants were spread throughout France which meant that the young people would need to travel alone to the chalet, which put people off.

As a result, the trip had to be cancelled due to insufficient numbers.

8.4. BLUE WHITE AND GREEN CLASSES

Les Flocons Verts is part of RelaiSoleil network of holiday centres and has piloted eco-citizen discovery classes known as blue, white and green classes

The holiday village is a group of linked chalets in Les Carroz d'Araches (Upper Savoy). Prices vary according to income (social tourism) which encourages a good social mix. The village focuses on discovering the culture and heritage in conjunction with local stakeholders.

The centre offers discovery programmes for schools, but no ski lessons. The "Cartable ouvert" (open schoolbag) classes are a fun way of learning about local heritage and have been very successful. The team of instructors tries to cover new and innovative themes.

The blue, white and green classes are a recent creation and are designed to reflect **concerns about the environment**. The programme has been devised using information available online and the team's own ideas. The basic format is a five-day course, which allows flexibility.

General environmental awareness is introduced at the beginning of the week before moving on to more specific issues such as **natural and renewable energy sources** and **pollution**. Children are asked to write a **code of conduct for eco-citizens** to translate the messages into practical actions.

Example activity: looking at the chair lifts and asking what type of energy they run on, whether they are really necessary and what the alternatives are.

Alternatively, looking at the centre's waste: what it is, its purpose and how it can be sorted or reduced.

Games are used in conjunction with scientific elements (observation, research, analysis, experiments). The pupils are given a discovery workbook with games (teachers receive educational factsheets).

It is useful to make comparisons between where students live and the mountains, which are a more extreme location where environmental problems have a greater impact:

- Example: traditional buildings in Savoy do not have TV aerials – why?
- Example: tour of the village, talking about professions in the mountains, and the links between the habitat and human activities.

Suggested activity: compare your home with the Flaine resort and say where you would rather live.

The programme was created using information available online and contributions from service providers and resource managers (mountain leaders, French national forestry service, French Agency for the Environment and Energy Management, local authorities, etc.). The centre is also part of Haute Savoie Junior association.

It takes at least three years of preparation to get a new product off the ground. The keyword to raise the interest of teachers is eco-citizen.

Working as a team within the centre is crucial for improving environmental consistency, but there is still more to be done.

There is already an international element with schoolchildren coming from Switzerland, but this side could be developed further. It is worth bearing in mind that other countries are often more critical if facilities fail to practise what they preach.

8.5. ASTERS YOUTH EVENT: KIDS IN THE WILD

Asters, conservation, management and awareness-raising

ASTERS is the Haute Savoie département body responsible for the conservation of natural habitats and its main mission is to protect and promote the natural heritage and resources of Upper Savoy. Environmental education serves to reinforce their work.

Providing information and raising awareness among the general public is managed through a policy of coordination and the promotion of managed sites through a range of activities :

- guided visits to the reserves and other sites managed by ASTERS
- school visits
- new teaching tools : ants pack, booklets, exhibitions, CAP (Corsica, Alps, Pyrenees) bearded vulture toolkit
- new events such as Kids in the wild (Môm' en nature).

ASTERS and the activities team also take part in local, département and national events such as the Science Festival (Chamonix), the Au bonheur des Mômes children's festival (Grand Bornand), Billes de bois wood festival (Les Gets), the Lac en partage (sharing the lake) event on the shores of Lake Annecy, and the Sallanches hunting festival.

The sessions are organised by the instructors, the wardens and ASTERS staff in conjunction with the Empreintes network, Espace Mont Blanc (which is responsible for coordinating all educational activities in natural reserves in the Mont Blanc area), associations of friends of the various natural reserves and the Centre de la Nature Montagnarde (centre for mountain nature).

The network of instructors has also provided its services outside the network of sites managed by ASTERS – on the Glières plateau and the Rovorée estate – at the behest of the département's General Council.

As a result, in 2006 over 4,400 schoolchildren attended at least one session and other non-scholastic events reached an audience of over 3,700.

A day of celebration and learning

The Kids in the wild (Môm' en nature) activities programme is a good example of how this can work: it brings together all the natural reserves in Upper Savoy and is held every year in the latter half of the school year.

The main aim of Kids in the wild is to encourage contacts between a number of schools which are situated close to a natural reserve by studying a single theme. Each class looks at one part of the broader theme. For example, in 2004, seven classes did work under the heading of "Natural reserves, a source of life", looking at the following aspects:

- working in the pastures in the Sixt Natural Reserve;
- hunting, fishing and picking natural produce in the natural reserve at the Dranse delta;
- the huts in the Contamines-Montjoie Natural Reserve;
- sports (paragliding and rock climbing) in the Passy Natural Reserve;
- the forestry officer in the Aiguilles Rouges Natural Reserve;
- a scientist at the Centre de la Nature Montagnarde in Sallanches;
- the role of the manager at the Bout du Lac d'Annecy Natural Reserve.

The first session was identical for all classes and involved a presentation on the various natural reserves and their tasks, on the Kids in the wild event and on the seven study areas. The subsequent sessions were organised by the instructors in accordance with their chosen programme, each one adapting to the group and the teacher's needs.

There are usually six scheduled sessions, including one field trip, and the end result is a teaching tool – a game, exhibition or model – that can be used during the final meet.

The seven classes all agree to meet up in early June. Designed as a rally, the second meet is held close to a natural reserve with a circuit that takes in the seven work stations with the tools created by each school.

The pupils are mixed up and divided into seven groups, with an average of three children from each class. Each group is led by a teacher and a warden from the natural reserve who acts as tour guide and provides more information about the protected areas.

This mixing allows the children to meet their peers from other Upper Savoy communes. Each group of three pupils presents "their" work station to the other children in the group – the work station designed by their class.

In this way, the children learn about the work done by all seven classes.

These work stations are the result of collaboration between the teacher and the instructor and can involve mental or physical challenges.

At the end of the day, all the children meet up for the prize-giving ceremony and a well-earned afternoon tea.

Kids in the wild provides a real, in-depth study of the protected areas. It allows the children to learn about other natural reserves as well as their local reserve.

Cooperation between teachers and instructors is essential when setting up this type of project or other events requiring several sessions. The teacher knows their class and how the pupils respond, and the instructor can modify the activities accordingly.

The instructor sends each school an educational project file describing a number of activities (subject areas to be covered, number of sessions, objectives, teaching methods used). These are generally provided as turnkey products, i.e. off the peg and ready to use. However, the teacher can also choose a subject they would like to study and possibly define how they would like the activity to be organised.

In such cases, contact between the instructor and the teacher is vital to the creation of a well-structured project: the instructor provides the natural science knowledge and covers the technical side (number of sessions, materials used, timing) while the teacher defines the aims and the most appropriate teaching methods.

This gives meaning to the activities and ensures they hang together well: the teacher has a project that fits in with their expectations and the children have activities that are at their level.

The activity should also be evaluated afterwards. The teacher can help the instructor enormously because the teacher is in constant contact with the class and can observe what information has been retained over the school year. For example, if the activity on tracks is held in winter, the teacher can review what the pupils remember in late spring.

An education project stretching over several sessions should always be jointly devised and taught by the instructor and the teacher, as the two can complement one another. Unfortunately, time is often a limiting factor.

When the classes meet up, the teachers are often surprised by **the children's level of commitment.**

Physical considerations: the work stations involve physical and mental activity (always fun, as part of a fun day). Walk between the work stations with a warden: 3-4 km over the course of the day.

The Alpine factor is not always emphasised (e.g. ants can be seen at school, but also iconic species like wolves and bearded vultures). **Why not organise a meet for eight classes from the eight Alpine countries at one site?**

It is important to **emphasise the Alpine and mountain element** of the activities being proposed (residential trips, activities) whenever possible. There is the issue of residents' sense of identity, helping visitors to appreciate the area's unique features and the economic issues specific to the mountains as a holiday destination.

8.6. EXPLORER CAMPS IN THE HIGH MOUNTAIN PASTURES

CREA, the Alpine Ecosystems Research Centre, is a not-for-profit association which seeks to develop scientific research into high-altitude environments and raise public awareness through scientific activities. CREA has organised mountain holidays for children aged 8-12 in the Chamonix valley.

The camps last five days and are based at the Blaïtière chalet, close to a walking path but in a secluded area. The mountain chalet has a refurbished old stable (where the children sleep, with meals served in the main chalet). The groups are small: 12 children. There are three helpers: a scientific instructor, an assistant instructor and a mountain leader or farmer

The main goal is to provide an introduction to science through living in a grazing area: helping young children from the valley to discover the mountains in a way other than skiing.

Starting point for the camp: forming a team of explorers to discover an unknown area and investigate what is there. The selection process is like a recruitment process, with children writing an application letter stating which position they would take in the team (geologist, astronomer, etc.) before the trip.

Activities on offer:

- Conducting a real experiment: taking samples of the insects before and after grazing (each child installs a homemade insect trap in strategic locations chosen by the children – gravel, trees, meadow, cowpats). The traps are emptied daily. Observation using binoculars, magnifying glasses and tweezers. Insects are pinned to a board. Basic principle: conducting experiment from start to finish (the process of studying a single specimen, as opposed to studying several anthills).
- Tracking chamois with the mountain leader
- Studying different mountain habitats

This is not a sports activity camp. **The daily walks are a way of getting to the study site. Map-reading skills are used to prepare for exploratory trips.** The activity is organised in a different way.

The children are local residents: no advertising further afield because of limited funds. Not many children who live in the valley are interested in this type of activity.

The camps are successful because the Pays du Mont Blanc multipurpose inter-commune association (SIVOM) pays a portion of the costs. CREA could provide this activity as part of the Espace Mont Blanc programme, which was set up to support this type of initiative.

It would also be possible to devise a trip with two or three overnight stages from a single accommodation base: starting in the valley, on site and then going over the col/across the border.

8.7. UCPA/VIA ALPINA YOUTH WALKING TRIPS

Via Alpina is a point of entry that can appeal to young people because of the inspirational routes and the values it represents. The Grande Traversée des Alpes association and UCPA have sought to build on this, forming a challenging partnership based around Alpine walking tours.

UCPA, a group tourism operator

UCPA is a not-for-profit association that seeks to give as many young people as possible an opportunity to discover and try their chosen sports. To this end, UCPA offers activity courses for all levels in around 60 different sports.

UCPA has developed a range of high-quality walking holidays in various parts of the Alps. These trips are characterised by a sense of discovering local differences and respect for the natural and cultural heritage.

Numbers in the groups are limited and the tours aim to highlight less popular areas. UCPA also tries to stagger visits across the early and late season as much as possible.

The products are built on excellent knowledge of the local area and its features, notably the use of local service providers and quality local produce. This means UCPA is able to offer a broad range of thematic approaches in terms of content, activities and timing. UCPA also seeks to work for sustainable development and to encourage cultural encounters.

A partnership between UCPA and Via Alpina

A partnership has been created between Via Alpina (GTA is the coordinating body in France) and UCPA to develop walking holidays for young people.

Objectives:

- To organise circuits that make good use of the Via Alpina trails, with the emphasis on changing places rather than staying in a single location and on walking in preference to mechanised transport. **Use of motorised vehicles is limited as much as possible.**

- To make use, wherever possible, of local service providers and products (information, guides, transport, food, accommodation, etc.), and in particular the registered Via Alpina network of partners.

- To create, where possible, these circuits in conjunction with other Via Alpina partners with a view to optimising service provision (especially geographical coverage).

- To encourage conduct that respects the environment and the local heritage whilst on these tours, particularly in terms of transport (public transport where possible), any luggage carrying (use of animals if possible or public transport), the way the participants behave towards the local populations (traditions, regulations, etc.), energy consumption, and waste (local produce, recyclable packaging, biodegradable washing powder, etc.).

- To facilitate the discovery of local heritage (natural sites, monuments, museums, etc.) and populations (times set aside for visits and/or meetings, detailed factsheets, use of interpreters, specialist guides and/or local contacts, etc.) in conjunction with the key elements of the Via Alpina message (one mountain range, diversity of places and cultures, discovery through walking, cross-border walks, sustainable development).

- To select appropriate thematic circuits to reflect the local areas (preferably less popular areas), the time of year (low season if possible), the level of difficulty, the activities and the duration so as to appeal to the widest possible audience .

- To feed back first-hand experience about the local contacts (relevance, involvement), the trails (route, quality, maintenance, safety, signposting, level of difficulty, popularity, etc.), information (tourist and heritage data), the service providers (particularly accommodation), services (especially public transport), heritage (quality, accessibility), new practices (i.e. different forms of walking), information media, participant satisfaction, local perception of the project.

UCPA is developing holidays for adults and young people with the Via Alpina label as part of its "Touring" product range. The walking tours are led by guides who are familiar with the local area and resources. The park visitor centres are included on the itinerary. The environmental side is not a priority for participants. They are more interested in **a lively atmosphere and meeting new people**. These products are intended to extend the current range of walking tours for young people by getting away from the focus on exercise. They are at the experimental stage. **At least three years of investment** are required before a new holiday product can be launched. The success of the holidays is largely dependent on the sensitivity of the teams that run them. **How can mountain walking tours appeal to young people?** UCPA is working on this subject by introducing innovative features in its holidays. Multi-activity holidays include walking, which is often also an excuse for bivouacking overnight. This is the only way to access some sites. Walking tours encourage a manageable level of independence for young people. The mountain guides also have an educational role to play on the walks. Many of them also hold a BAFD qualification (certificate of director of studies).

Example of UCPA walking tour

The Dents du Midi

Upper Savoy & Valais: 6 days, 7 nights, from Sunday to Monday.

Running from Trieste to Monaco, Via Alpina forms a symbolic link between the eight Alpine countries: Slovenia, Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Italy, France and Monaco. It is a walking trail that can be broken down into no less than 161 stages. Our tour climbs above the Rhone to the majestic Salanf  col. We then continue to the northern French Alps, the cirque at Fer   Cheval, the les Fiz chain, the Aiguilles Rouges, and finish at the foot of Mont Blanc.

From the Vanoise to Mont Thabor

Savoy & Piedmont: 6 days, 7 nights, from Sunday to Monday.

A trek that follows part of the red Via Alpina trail (the European equivalent of the GR 5) from the slopes of the Vanoise massif to the Valle Stretta in Italy. This is an outdoor adventure in the heart of the Alps, with high-level paths and an unspoiled environment and wildlife.

8.8. SCHOOL EXCHANGES

The Monaco Alpine Club, which is also the national coordinator for Via Alpina in Monaco, has set up an exchange between high school pupils from three Alpine countries (Italy, France and Monaco). The schools involved are the Collège Charles III de Monaco, Collège Jean Franco in Saint Étienne de Tinée, and the Scuola Media in Valdieri.

The first event took place on 30 May to 1 June 2007 and was held at the Mediterranean Centre close to Monaco. The Centre houses a botanical garden containing rare plant species. The exchange programme will be continued in 2008 with a visit to Saint Etienne de Tinée and then to Italy in 2009.

A wide network of partners has been involved in establishing and organising the exchanges and a number of preparatory meetings have been held on various occasions, which have improved cooperation. In addition to a trip bringing together schoolchildren and teachers from three countries, the aim is to create a lasting partnership built around the Via Alpina.

Study themes

The project has established a three-year work programme based on study themes. The range of topics may alter and will be reviewed over the coming years. Naturally, the pupils' interest in the topics will be a key factor.

Priority themes to be covered each year

- Via Alpina: objectives, the trails, the Alps, the eight Alpine countries, etc.
- The Mercantour and Alpi Marittime area, extending from the Col de Larche to the

Mediterranean: the geography of the massif, the Mercantour National Park and Alpi Marittime Nature Park, flora and fauna, the Mediterranean Sea, the inhabitants, the languages, etc.

Ad hoc themes to be covered to reflect the venue

- Historic routes: old Roman roads, the salt road
- Understanding the landscape: introduction to navigation, using a compass, map-reading
- Forested mountains: information, management, conservation, the timber industry
- Water: the weather, snow, rain, ice, water networks

Preparing of the event

Each school spends the whole year looking at the common topics (Via Alpina, the Alps) and one specific theme. Each group of pupils investigates and researches this subject at school. The group describes the topic in relation to the local environment.

Once the topics have been selected, the three groups can work online on agreed days at set times to allow pupils to have preliminary discussions and share documents before the larger meeting.

The three groups each produce a report and give an oral and visual presentation (slideshow and/or video, depending on the technical facilities available) to the other pupils.

The host group focuses particularly on local heritage.

Sample preparatory work before the meeting

Collège Jean Franco (France)

Architectural heritage (larch wood), seismography, major risks, maps and navigation, geology, plans for joint trip with the Valdieri school in May.

Scuola Media di Valdieri (Italy): subjects chosen in consultation with the Alpi Marittime Nature Park.

The mountain and Alpine environment, local geology, the beech tree, architectural heritage (high-altitude hay barns).

January to February: winter at mid-altitude, snowshoe walks to visit a beech plantation.

April: the monumental beech trees at San Giacomo d'Entracque and the Moncolombo glacial valley.

May: wood and stone activities, mountain resources, Segale ecomuseum trail.

Collège Charles III (Monaco)

Climbing (climbing wall at the Collège Charles III, la Loubière, Peillon), geology, navigation, environmental ethics (recycling paper).

Planting a symbolic tree in the Revère Regional Park, map-making lessons, following the exploits of Mr. Novak, a Monegasque mountaineer on an expedition to Mount Everest (operation to recover the waste left by other expeditions).

Activities in Monaco

A discovery workshop for pupils as part of the event held in May in Monaco.

The groups were made up of schoolchildren from all three countries. Each group attended each of the workshops which were held in parallel.

- Conservation and management of a coastal forested massif: visit to the Mont Gros tree plantation with the National Forestry Office (role of coastal forests, reforestation and restoration of the Tête de Chien massif).

- Rock climbing at la Loubière.

- Reading a map and the landscape: map-making and navigation on the Tête de Chien ridge (nature conservation in the southern Alps, the Franco-Italian mountain area formed by the Mercantour National Park and the Alpi Marittime Nature Park, maintaining biodiversity).

The pupils from Monaco then acted as tour guides for a visit to the Franco-Monegasque conurbation (environmental issues in a coastal high-altitude city: transport, waste management, urban planning).

How to take things further

Problems encountered

- The IT equipment is not always advanced enough to match the teachers' ambitions. It is hard to find sufficient funding, requiring a number of sources of finance with disparities between the countries. The funding provided is sometimes only disbursed after the event, which makes it hard to make advances on expenses.

- Having three separate workshops with three mixed nationality groups requires three teachers from each school. A large number of parent volunteers and a high degree of commitment on the part of the teachers is required.

- A sports teacher from each school is needed to oversee the climbing workshop or alternatively a professional guide.

- The schools in France and Monaco have time specifically allocated for environmental education and discovery projects (IDD). However, the number of hours available for these environmental discovery activities has been reduced.

Ideas for improving the scheme

- Pupils would be more motivated if their work was publicised and promoted outside of the group (online or as a multimedia presentation). They could organise an evening presentation at the school on their return.

- It is important to define an underlying theme to structure the discovery topics. This could be related to an issue covered by all pupils and could include local research.

- Provide a welcome pack for pupils before the trip to improve their understanding of what is involved and encourage them to take part, rather than consume. Definition of the

trip objectives, the objectives for each participant, what is expected of them, an "eco-citizen's charter" for the event, a small notebook for specific environmental information (what really struck me, a good idea that I can reuse, my environmental commitment).

- Spending the night in a mountain hut on the Via Alpina would emphasise the mountain element.

8.9. RANDO DES COPAINS (*FRIENDS' HIKE*)

The Mont Blanc Base Camp is an event organised by the Passy tourist office in partnership with Espace Mont Blanc to celebrate the mountains and walking in a way that respects the environment.

The event is founded on a broad partnership (high-altitude sports sector, local authorities, associations, professional groups, tourism operators and the media).

Via Alpina Youth wanted to be involved in the event by offering a "rando des copains" (friendship walk) in conjunction with Espace Mont Blanc and the Alpine Ecosystems Research Centre: a two-day discovery walk including an overnight stay in a hut on 23 and 24 June 2007.

Overview of the Rando des Copains project

Two days of discovery activities in the Anterne reserve between Sixt and the Assy plateau, with a night in the Moède-Anterne hut, in a working mountain environment on a Via Alpina trail that extends across the Alps. Walking along the paths provides plenty of opportunities for an active demonstration of what is happening in the environment. Reports on the activities are fed back via a live radio show.

Possible themes: old mines, the Pormenaz meadow, the natural reserve, mountain forests, global warming, the Mont Blanc massif as part of the Alps, the Via Alpina trail and values.

Objectives:

- An active walking experience combined with learning about the environment
- Discovering the Via Alpina and its implications for the future of the Alps
- Taking part in the Base Camp event, which is a celebration of walking and the mountains
- Understanding the mountains, the inhabitants and activities

Method:

- On the ground, full immersion
- Taking an interest in what is going on nearby, stimulating the participants' curiosity
- Using the natural progression of the path to organise activity breaks
- Giving young people an opportunity to talk about their experiences of the mountains

Who is involved?

Jérôme Ballet, mountain leader (Vivre montagne et aventure) and Olivier Rigault (mountain forests and global warming, CREA, Chamonix).

Review

The location and route offered enough variety in terms of environments (meadow, forest, stream, grazing, cliffs) and in terms of human occupation (architecture, chalets, huts, etc). The environment and the local stakeholders vary according to the altitude.

The children were enthusiastic, had volunteered for the walk, and were used to walking (local recruitment via the Passy tourist office and CREA). The walk allowed everyone **to go at their own pace**, without hurrying. It is important to convey the fact that people can take their time, because the group also has to be aware of the limitations of the mountain environment.

The day has to be structured so as to avoid boredom, varying the format (trail running, treasure hunts, games, long stretches individually and as a group). Short breaks can be included.

A good deal of attention needs to be given to how to **link the activities by the speakers**, their limitations, the meeting points and how fast the group moves. For example, the meeting with the warden was fascinating, but the timing was poor: the picnic had to be cut short. At the hut, the hut guardian was very willing to talk to the young people, but other visitors monopolised his time. The time with the guardian was scheduled for the morning before the group left.

The conclusion is that **generous time slots need to be allocated for each contact** and plenty of time needs to be allowed for transfers. The leader can always adjust by planning extra activities "just in case" that can be slotted in during the trip or by altering the route.

The tour must emphasise points of interest rather than the overall distance.

The radio programme was a definite bonus. The Rando des Copains was broadcast as part of the Franco-Swiss programme Bivouac, which led to the **realisation of a live radio programme** with support from Radio Semnoz. The children were directly involved, managed the microphone and were able to ask questions.

In general terms, the approach should allow the children to get involved and to take ownership of the walk, **making it their own adventure**. Different tasks can be allocated: looking after the map, being a reporter or responsible for the group's water supply, etc. Photographs and short video clips are useful techniques, provided that they are put to good use and the necessary equipment is available.

On a five-day trip, the children can choose a research topic and genuinely study and monitor an issue that interests them. **The tour is far more than just getting from A to B in the mountains**. CREA has shown that it is possible to set up miniature outdoor laboratories with simple equipment for short science lessons.

The specific nature of this trip requires all the organisers to be involved in the preparation phase. It appears that the most effective approach is for the person responsible for the walking part to make all the local contacts to avoid information being lost and misunderstandings. Please note that a medical and food consent form are required, even for short trips.

This two-day walking tour has again demonstrated the potential of the mountain environment and its appeal for young people.

9. ACTIVITY FACTSHEETS

9.1. YOYO: GLOBAL DISCOVERY IN THE ALPS

This organised activity is designed to help create Alpine eco-citizens. It was devised and piloted by Guido Meeus (Vanoise National Park) for schoolchildren in the Savoy region. It is suitable for young people aged 10 to 14. Other similar activities should be implemented to improve Alpine awareness: the sense of belonging to an area, awareness of shared concerns and problems.

The activity uses a large-scale map of the Alps. New features can be added to the map (using stickers) as the work progresses and as the participants discover new information with the instructor's assistance.

At the outset, the children:

- are asked to name the Alpine countries
- look at geological evolution on Earth
- learn about how plant life varies from one place to the next

Designed to show children that the Earth moves, that mountains were once part of the ocean and that where we are now was once covered by glaciers.

The children look at a map to see how the different mountain chains are related.

The Alps are made up of lots of smaller massifs that have created very different landscapes: photographs of each massif are used to help children to **appreciate this diversity**.

Children are part of the learning process: one child acts the part of a mountain, with the instructor as the glacier – the ice pushes, the mountain resists, and when the glacier melts, the mountain crumbles to scree. Or a child plays the glacier and the instructor plays the vegetation: as the glacier advances, the vegetation retreats to the valley.

This shows children that plants advance and retreat as the climate changes. It is a **fun way of explaining complex concepts to children**.

Maps showing different plant species in the Alps demonstrate the unity and consistency that is found throughout the Alps. Observation and explanations help the children to understand that the Alps are essentially one area, despite national borders and languages, and that they share a future.

Interpretation is a means of raising awareness that involves translating, for a given audience, the deeper meaning of a reality and the hidden links to humankind. It is an approach that encourages personal experience and descriptive knowledge, as opposed to a strict rational format.

Quebec Conservation Union

9.2. WORKSHOP ON GLOBAL WARMING

"Can you see climate change? What about looking at the sights along a path?" Minutes of a workshop with children aged 8-12 held in Col des Montets (Chamonix valley) in July 2005 in conjunction with CREA. The workshop marked the opening of the Mountain Lakes path by Espace Mont Blanc.

Objectives

- Looking at a global issue affecting the planet and ecology on a walking path in the Alps
- Using a variety of methods: scientific, sensory, creative, descriptive, games
- Encouraging observation and discovery throughout the walk to encourage children to be inquisitive

Route

Col des Montets chalet, botanical trail, Tré les Champs, Mont Blanc tramway to the Aiguillette d'Argentière and back.

Instead of aiming to cover a large distance, the objective is to give the children time to explore and to enjoy walking at their own pace.

Possible activities

- Identifying plants: looking for plants on the botanical trail using a preprepared booklet. Commenting on the plants' vulnerability to climate change
- Team quiz on climate change
- Observing glaciers and how they evolve: supplemented by old photographs or pictures
- Identifying glaciers from photographs
- Drawing what the landscape will look like in the future
- The hidden landscape: in pairs, one person hides their eyes and the other describes what he/she sees
- Presentation of the Alps as a whole: impact of humans on their environment, discussion of what the future might bring and what we can change.

Press release: 2 July at the Col des Montets

Temperatures in the French Alps have risen by 1-3 degrees Celsius over the last forty years, which is more than in the rest of France. This is one of the most striking findings of a detailed climate study conducted in the Alps between 1958 and the present day by researchers at the Météo France Snow Study Centre located near Grenoble.

Global warming is no longer something that may happen in the future: it is now affecting our daily lives and activities. The mountains are particularly sensitive to the changes that will transform the landscape (glaciers, snowfall, tree species, plants).

How can this subject be addressed whilst out walking with young people? This was the subject of the workshop organised by Via Alpina Youth in conjunction with CREA (Chamonix) on Saturday 2 July at the Col des Montets to mark the opening of the Lakes path. A dozen children aged 8-12 attended the workshop entitled "Can you see climate change? What about looking at the sights along a path?"

The aim of this type of mobile workshop is not to cover a large distance, but rather to give the children time to explore and enjoy walking at their own pace. A variety of activities

were on offer that were designed to ease children into the subject, without giving them a science lecture.

The site chosen highlights the changes to the Chamonix glaciers but other elements are also visible. The discovery methods used were varied and based on learning through play. Each child was given a booklet for studying the plants along the path. Photographs of the same glaciers at different times in history demonstrated the changes that are taking place.

The subject was far from exhausted after two hours of walking and discovery activities. The children enjoyed taking part in the activities and were very interested in the subject.

By using appealing and fun content, global issues relating our planet can be discussed with children whilst walking along an Alpine path. This is the challenge for Via Alpina Youth: making better use of all the resources available on Alpine walking trails for environmental education.

9.3. LANDSCAPE WORKSHOP

Workshops held in June 2005 during the Ubaye Festival of Mountain Landscapes.

| Geoglyphs workshop (Maljasset) | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Description | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Geoglyphs are drawings created with stones (such as the Nazca Lines in Peru, or the designs created by soldiers at the Col de la Bonnette) and are part of our heritage. A workshop for talking about stone, touching it, leaving a mark, getting your hands dirty. - The task was to create the Via Alpina logo in stone on the banks of the Ubaye river, where it could be seen from the path, using as many colours as possible. A geologist was on hand to explain basic facts about the origins and colours of the stones taken from the river. |
| Pros | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approach encompasses land-art, imagination and creativity - Time for individual reflection as part of personal development - Contribution to a piece of temporary artwork as part of a group - Via Alpina link emphasised in the programme - Geoglyphs express something about the place where you are, using all five senses, and require personal involvement. This workshop has set the ball rolling, rewriting history from this starting point. It began in a limited area but which nevertheless provided a sense of different orders of magnitude. |
| Cons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Title is not very appealing to youth audience: geoglyph is a technical term that may be off-putting. - The link to Via Alpina is not immediately obvious. |
| Possible next steps | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Send out photographs from the project to publicise the activity in all eight Alpine countries. - Promote the concept of a workshop that can be repeated elsewhere (like balloon mail: send out e-mails and request a response). - Studying the sounds of rocks, recording the sounds, processing them and bringing musicians on board. - Science students at Barcelonnette's high school are studying geology: bring them on board. |

| « Pitchot Tastaïre » : little taster workshop | |
|---|--|
| Description | Introduction to the tastes and flavours of the Alps. Food tasting. The Ubaye Petit Testeur (little taster) certificate is awarded to the discerning tasters. |
| Pros | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction to flavours - Certificate is symbolic and inclusive |
| Cons | No obvious link to the landscape |

| Post' Alpes competition | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Description | Competition to design a stamp on the subject of landscape. Six prizes for different themes The winning designs will be exhibited |
| Pros | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual artistic expression - Different representations of landscape - Open to everyone |
| Cons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to be aware that competing is not always compatible with the teaching aims (the fact of ranking is controversial, groups may lose heart). Reward participation rather than giving prizes for the best design, explain |

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| | <p>the designs, emphasise diversity, original ideas and unusual perspectives. Concept of competition: what are we trying to do by singling out the best entries? Use classifications instead of rankings, reward all entries, emphasise personal favourites (less of a ranking). - No particular youth angle</p> |
| Possible next steps | <p>- Imagining landscape in time: 50 years ago, or 50 years in the future</p> |

9.4. UCPA TRIPS: RAISING AWARENESS

UCPA has built on the work done by Mountain Riders and Surf Riders to develop awareness-raising approaches for young people. This is a new initiative that still requires a lot of work in terms of training, developing activities and designing teaching aids

Training centre directors, head leaders and young unit managers is the priority. Levels of awareness vary among sports professionals, with mountain leaders having some knowledge and mountain bike instructors having less.

All instructors need to have a comparable level of knowledge. Permanent and seasonal teams should take the same line with young people to improve consistency. Coordination between the maintenance and catering staff and instructors is required. Getting everyone to contribute to a standard educational project is a good way to generate **the necessary synergies**.

UCPA uses the tools produced by Mountain Riders for youth work (films, exhibitions, toolkits). The UCPA educational programme forms the basis for educational projects as part of a residential course. How can sustainable development be better integrated? Some trips, notably for the 6-12 age bracket, incorporate creative approaches using role plays: "Saving Planet Earth - where in the 21st century children used to go skiing". Environmental issues are included as part of the holiday theme. They are part of the activities. The main driver for these holidays is still the pleasure of being part of a group and being active. The young people are in holiday mood, **so environmental education has to be fun**.

The Mountain Riders DVD can be shown during informal sessions. The humorous style appeals to children. The instructors can then answer any questions that arise.

Posters in the centre should provide useful information or contain simple games, such as quizzes.

A murder mystery game, standard evening entertainment in holiday centres, has been adapted to look at the issue of pollution. These holidays are a real opportunity to raise awareness through lots of tiny details without becoming overbearing or creating a classroom atmosphere.

The challenge for the teaching team is to stick to the educational aims whilst maintaining the young people's interest and engaging them. Parties and music liven up sports holidays. UCPA's target audience would not go to sports training camps. The aim is to get the young people to come along and to introduce new ideas once they are there.

Environmental education needs to be provided **by enthusiastic teams** who are able to convey relevant information in a way that speaks to young people.

UCPA therefore gives each centre the freedom to realise these objectives in their own way. An activities holiday guide is distributed with advice for the teams. However, for safety reasons, all guidelines for sporting activities must be followed.

UCPA provides video game facilities and organises techno music nights. It builds on urban culture and trends. All of this is designed **to meet young people on their own ground** and then gradually **introduce new ideas**.

UCPA works with corporate clients (works committees), who are major driving forces. UCPA's holiday facilities have to comply with specifications that are not always eco-friendly. Emphasis is placed on hygiene, with rules about showers and changing bed linen, for example. **Regulatory constraints** are a major burden when organising trips. Only large organisations are able to meet the requirements, as they can provide their own experts and monitoring systems. The département's health and hygiene regulations limit the number of persons per room. Sudden change of this criteria can jeopardise a centre's future if it does not have the means to change the facilities immediately.

Buying local products raises the issue of where supplies come from. How can a centre with 200 beds get regular supplies of local produce without encountering unacceptable transport and delivery problems.

9.5. ACTIVITIES IN CONJUNCTION WITH MOUNTAIN RIDERS

Environmental awareness approaches and tools are often designed by professional teachers for use in schools. Mountain Riders has successfully created a different style that is more accessible and fun.

Initially focussed on ski resorts, the association has expanded its scope and the subjects covered, including producing introductory brochures for summer visitors to the mountains. The association was created around the snowboarding scene. It develops awareness-raising tools designed for young people and uses general communication techniques. The tools are fun, shaped by the snowboarding culture, and go down well with young audiences.

Flagship themes

Global warming is the main starting point for environmental issues. The phenomenon has been widely covered in the press. Al Gore's film "An Inconvenient Truth" reached a huge audience and has presented effective and valid scientific arguments. However, the information available is confusing and contradictory: young people have no points of reference in relation to global developments.

Basic information is required and helps to provide a better understanding whilst avoiding doom-mongering and oversimplification. Simple analogies are used, such as comparing the planet to a person with a fever. Describing the potential consequences clarifies the potential dangers and shows the changes we could see in our daily lives.

Ecological footprints are an effective tool for raising awareness. Everyone can measure the impact of their lifestyle on the planet. At present, northern European lifestyles require more space and resources than are available on the Earth. We are living on credit - or a time bomb. It would take six planets to maintain the average north American lifestyle – **Europe's lifestyle would need three planets.** In the space of three and a half months, humankind consumes resources that should last one year. The implications are simple and striking. The message grabs the listener's attention and is then explained. Simple flyers with a series of questions allow the reader to calculate his/her ecological footprint depending on their chosen sport. This is the first step and more detailed questionnaires can be used to explore the subject further (see WWF and UN websites).

It is also possible to calculate the **carbon footprint** of a place or company. Environmental diagnostics can suggest solutions for decision-makers and politicians in relation to amenities or the organisation of services. Ski lift operators have begun to take steps to comply with ISO 14001. These developments will have knock-on effects for summer tourism.

As the economy becomes greener, new distribution channels are emerging and environmentally-friendly growth is becoming a possibility. Patagonia has announced that by 2010 all of its products will be designed using recycled materials.

The mountains are in the front line of global warming because of the prospect of shrinking glaciers. The Alpine ecosystems are fragile and the changes have manifold consequences. An OECD study examined the current situation and prospects for winter sports resorts. **It is estimated that 60% of resorts will survive.**

Mountain Riders is also taking practical action. The example of clean-up operations on the ski slopes after the winter season shows the potential for involving young people in activities which have a direct impact.

The association offers mountain resort managers an approach that permits constant improvements to the eco-compatibility of their activities with no stigma. The organisation prefers to encourage change rather than pointing the finger of blame.

Teenagers are very conscious of personal hygiene. Their **water consumption** can be wasteful. Raising awareness of how to save water should demonstrate that it is possible to stay clean without wasting water. The links to daily life are essential in order to create

engagement and interest.

Holidays in the mountains are an ideal time for changing behaviour. The ecological footprint of a walking tour in the mountains with overnight bivouacs is virtually nil. However, it is definitely a pleasure and lower-than-average consumption does not have any harmful effects. Thus what can be achieved for a short period can help us to think about our life during the rest of the year.

Spending the night in a hut, sitting around the camp fire or identifying edible plants are all ways of living differently and generating a response from young people. The opposite extreme would be a picnic on a mountain walk made up solely of packaged processed products, none of them local – a phenomenon that is all too common.

It is important to keep shifting between the global and local for the purpose of clarification. For example, what in my life could have an impact on the Alps as a whole? What structural changes within a massif will allow me to live a more ecologically-sound lifestyle?

ANNEXES

10. USEFUL RESSOURCES

10.1. THE VIA ALPINA QUALITY GUIDE

The Via Alpina Quality Guide provides a frame of reference for all stakeholders. It describes the elements that serve to create the shared identity of the trails and the activities on offer. It suggests implementation standards and sets out examples of best practice from all over the Alps.

> The philosophy of walking tours

The Via Alpina trails have been selected from existing long-distance paths on the basis of the following features:

- **An international trail**
 - Crossing the eight Alpine countries from coast to coast roughly in proportion to their share of the Alps
 - More than 60 border crossings
 - Bounded by two internationally famous locations
 - All five trails are international
- **A long-distance path with a strong Alpine identity**
 - Takes in most of the Alpine massifs, including both the main range and the pre-Alps
 - Passes close to the most famous Alpine locations and peaks
- **An accessible trail**
 - Well-signposted mountain walks
 - Moderate level of difficulty: no technical climbing or glaciers
 - Reasonable length stages and moderate changes in elevation
 - Discreet Via Alpina signposting
 - A manageable length (341 stages, which equates to one year or five summers' worth of walking)
 - Links to the major regional, national and European long-distance walking paths
- **Joined-up services**
 - Accommodation and meals available every evening
 - Shops and services at regular intervals
 - Frequent links with public transport
 - A large number of guided walks available on different subjects
 - Centralised booking services at local and regional level
 - Technical, practical, environmental and cultural information is updated regularly
- **An outstanding natural environment that is treated with respect**
 - A trail through the biodiversity of the different Alpine ranges and different altitude bands (0 to 3000 m above sea level)
 - Passes through over 40 natural parks and reserves
 - Awareness-raising programmes
 - Avoids overcrowded areas and sanctuaries
 - No major new infrastructure
- **A trail for discovering Alpine cultures and traditions**
 - Many sections go through inhabited cultural landscapes
 - Promotes historical sites, museums, heritage sites and local architecture
 - Promotes festivals and key events in the Alpine calendar that are also environmentally-friendly
- **A contribution to local development**
 - Within the Alps, 30 administrative regions and approximately 200 communes are involved
 - Frequent stretches through villages and valleys to encourage interaction with the local inhabitants
 - Encourages the use of existing infrastructure and services

- Stimulates the development of high-quality secondary services
- Via Alpina is an effective media portal that provides access to the network of European, national, regional and local walking paths

> The spirit of Via Alpina

Quatre points peuvent être considérés comme les valeurs directrices, l'« esprit » de Via Alpina :

Four elements can be seen as the guiding values for the Via Alpina spirit:

- Walking the Via Alpina provides a **complete immersion in the unique and varied world of the Alps**. The primary appeal is the promise of exploring the diversity of this realm: eight countries, magnificent landscapes, local traditions, different cultures, different individuals all living a mountain lifestyle. The Alpine regions all share these features, but also have their own clear identities.
- Via Alpina offers a **way to discover new places while walking**. The network of walking paths has been designed to suit different types of walkers (fitness fanatics, families, adventure-lovers and ordinary tourists). The walks use well-marked paths that are well-maintained and do not involve any serious technical difficulties. Plus there is always the option of spending a day and night recovering in the range of accommodation provided in the villages

- or in a mountain hut if you are at altitude.

- Via Alpina is not just a walking tour: it is also a strong brand. It forms a **physical link between all the Alpine countries**. It brings together all the inhabitants of the Alps and is a high-profile vehicle for promoting the Alps as European region with a strong identity.
- Via Alpina also **contributes to sustainable development**. One of the aims of Via Alpina is to implement the Alpine Convention by contributing to sustainable development in the regions structured around the long-distance walking paths. Via Alpina also provides an international point of reference for considering how to incorporate sustainable processes into mountain tourism in the Alps (such as educating the general public, applying good environmental practices, promoting public transport and supporting traditional farming methods, etc.).

Via Alpina:

- ***Full immersion in the unique and varied world of the Alps***
- ***A way of discovering new places whilst walking***
- ***A physical link between all the Alpine countries***
- ***A contribution to sustainable development***

10.2. VIA ALPINA YOUTH PRODUCTIONS

> Interpretation in the mountain environment

Records of the 3rd Via Alpina Youth seminar (October 2006, Lanslebourg, Savoy) organised in conjunction with the Vanoise National Park and Sentinelles des Alpes.

This co-training event was attended by around twenty participants who considered how to promote heritage to young people. The event was organised in conjunction with the Vanoise National Park and the Sentinelles des Alpes network and was attended by local politicians (Lanslebourg local council). It also provided an opportunity to extend our understanding of interpretation methods as a teaching tool with a presentation by the Ecologists of the Euzière, who are recognised experts in the field. Valentina Zingari, a Franco-Italian anthropologist who specialises in border regions, provided some fascinating in-depth insights into the cross-border issues. The records of the seminar were produced by three interns from the Poisy Institute of Agricultural Engineering and are available online at the REEMA website (http://www.reema.fr/papyrus.php?site=1&menu=31&id_projet=5) which hosts the action network's activities. The records provide minutes of the different sessions but also contain a toolkit with information, definitions, and interpretation methodology factsheets that can be used

either to plan activities or interpretation facilities.

> Young people and walking

Records of the 4th Via Alpina Youth seminar (June 2007, Serre-Chevalier, Hautes Alpes) held in conjunction with UCPA.

New ideas, discussion of past experience and analysis of the current situation.

Addressing questions such as:

- How can we structure discovery and walking trips to the Alps in the summer?
- How to create active approaches for raising environmental awareness
- How can we build on new disciplines that appeal more to young people?
- What/who is the youth audience in the mountains today?
- What factors limit overnight group stays in the mountains?
- How can we develop operations in holiday centres?

> *These documents and others relating to Via Alpina Youth are available from the following websites: www.reema.fr and www.gta-alpes.com*

10.3. ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION REFERENCE MATERIAL

Extract from the GRAINE Rhône-Alpes Charter

Regional network for environmental education (March 2004)

> Educational principles

Environmental education uses a range of teaching practices that build on past experience.

> Rooted in the local area

Local approaches encourage participation, questions and the will to act, but also encourage a broad and multifaceted vision that reflects the **diversity of**

stakeholders and the complexities of environmental issues in a given area. Creating links with the local area also allows environmental education to incorporate **global issues**.

> Learning by doing

Experimentation facilitates and gives meaning to the learning process. In environmental education, there is no audience: instead **participants are stakeholders**, all of whom are involved in **creating a shared project** and gaining knowledge, skills, interpersonal skills and personal development.

> Mixing methods and approaches

The **complex** nature of environmental issues and the different ways in which we interact with the environment are suited to

an interdisciplinary approach. This approach is ideally suited to a **combination of theoretical and practical approaches** and to alternating between individual and group work, thereby allowing **different approaches** to be used in a single project (sensory, scientific, structured, creative, games, exploration).

> Encouraging and respecting different points of view

Recognising that no teaching can be unbiased also means that we have to reject any kind of preaching in environmental education activities. Instead we should encourage and respect **all different** points of view.

French-speaking ERE* group: Guidelines

**ERE stands for "éducation relative à l'environnement", or environmental education.*

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Environmental education that focuses on sustainable development is education that gives priority to values. The educational structure that we create should help students to understand that the Earth is a shared asset that we need to care for and that all humans need to work with one another, with the Earth and with all living things. This education is designed to encourage each individual to think, make decisions and act independently.

It should generate a sense of responsibility that prompts us all to take action, should mean that all citizens become champions of democratic values and are always willing to apply those values. Education for sustainable development teaches respect.

The education process applies all humans, no matter what their age, nationality, origin or social position. It combines the formal, informal and unstructured. It is not intended to train an elite: the approach is inclusive and thrives on

diversity. It helps us to understand that everyone has an impact on their surroundings. It seeks to encourage as many people as possible to make the day-to-day choices that are needed to eradicate poverty and to protect, restore and improve the quality of our environment.

Education for sustainable development produces a constructive attitude. It is designed to get rid of fatalism, to combat the "I can't change anything" mentality and to encourage everyone to think and then to take action. It demonstrates that each one of us can make a difference. It promotes and publicises genuine successes on the ground; it encourages those who take action to talk about what they are doing, no matter what the range, scope and level of the action.

This form of education focuses on action: it encourages individuals and groups to get involved in the social and political life

of their local area and at a global level. Education for sustainable development teaches participation.

It is not advocating a new ideology. In fact, it takes a critical look at the concept of development, which by its nature contains the seeds of non-sustainability when viewed in purely financial terms. Education for sustainable development teaches critical thinking.

It promotes a social philosophy that extends to all humans. It looks at links: the links between an individual's daily life and all elements of their surroundings and the links to others in a shared area. It also considers the links that connect us with everyone else on the planet and future generations. Education for sustainable development teaches cooperation across time and space.

It seeks to improve each student's attention span. The content is important,

the environmental educator's motivation always needs to be considered, but so too do the format and method.

The methods used are a key element in education for sustainable development. Thus practical field work allows students to perceive the realities of the situation, group work encourages cooperation, creative methods identify new ways of working together, interdisciplinary approaches give a holistic view and debates prepare the participants for life in a genuine democracy. All are essential ingredients.

Environmental education is clearly part of a sustainable development model.

Text produced by the Planet'ERE Steering Committee (French-speaking network for environmental education) on 19 May 2002 at Rambouillet.

11. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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www.reema.fr

Via Alpina

www.via-alpina.org

Grande Traversée des Alpes

www.grande-traversee-alpes.com

Vanoise National Park

www.vanoise.com

Sentinelles des Alpes

www.sentinellesdesalpes.com - +33 (0)4 79 25 36 98

FACIM (Foundation for international cultural activities in the mountains)

www.savoie-patrimoine.com - +33 (0)4 79 60 58 98

Réseau alpin des espaces protégés

www.alparc.org

Bivouac <http://www.bivouac-jeunes.com/bivouac-jeunes.php>,

Esprit montagne <http://www.esprit-montagne.com> ,

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The Phenoclim project on climate change

<http://www.crea.hautsavoie.net/phenoclim/index.php>,

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<http://france.mountainwilderness.org/index.php?action=afficher&rub=61> ,

Mountain Riders <http://www.mountain-riders.org/>

The quotes relating to interpretation are taken from the website <http://www.guide-patrimoine.ch>

11.2. READING MATERIAL

«A la découverte de trois régions alpines, une culture bas Valais, vallée d'Aoste, Haute-Savoie et Savoie » (*Discovering three Alpine regions: the culture of the lower Valais, the Aosta Valley, Upper Savoy and Savoy*), Programme Interreg II, Union européenne, 2000

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Dictionnaire encyclopédique des Alpes (Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the Alps) with full bibliography and hyperlinks available on the éditions Glénat website. A mine of Alpine information.

"Itinérance Nature" guide (Nature walking tours), Louis Espinassous and Jaques Lachambre: a practical guide for planning nature walking tours. Covers educational issues and technical matters, plus tried and tested hints and tips. The authors have between twenty and thirty years of leading walking tour groups and are therefore able to give very practical advice on how to lead a group through the hazards and delights of the outdoors, in complete autonomy, with a packhorse or from a limited number of bases. This book is not available from bookshops: it can only be ordered from the Education Environnement association. Available in a handy 21 x 14.9 cm format, the guide costs €15.

11.3. OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

Alpine Convention cartoon

The Community of Alpine club working groups (CAA – Alpine Club) has produced a comic strip about the Alpine Convention. This idea was the fruit of cooperation between the Austrian, Italian and Slovenian Alpine clubs. The Austrian Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forests, the Environment and Water Management provided the financing for the project under the Austrian presidency of the Alpine Convention.

The national Alpine clubs will distribute the 16-page comic book which is available in French, German, Italian and Slovenian. It will be distributed to members and also to tourists who visit the Alps. The book presents the Alpine Convention and its significance for the Alpine clubs in a way that is both easy to understand and entertaining. Climbers and mountaineers will learn about the key elements of the Alpine Convention that affect them directly and how to implement these measures effectively.

To order copies of the comic book or for more information, go to <http://www.alpenverein.at> (German), <http://www.cai.it> (Italian) or <http://www.pzs.si> (Slovenian and English)

The Ekotribu website

This is an excellent support and discussion tool for groups of young people working on environmental education and sustainable development projects. The different sections on the website allow each group to:

- create their own interactive project area
- have discussions with other groups in the forums and chat rooms
- make use of the educational resources available online
- keep up to date with what other groups of young people are doing and developments in environmental education in France.

Ekotribu is designed to help instructors and teachers in the education process whilst encouraging teamwork within groups of young people working on projects. The website

makes the link between environmental education projects and ICT skills. Ekotribu is free and easy to access. It meets the needs of educators by making it easier to realise and monitor projects.

<http://www.ekotribu.org/>

Young people address the question of sustainable transport solutions in the Alps

A conference on "Intelligent mobility choices by and for young people in the Alps" was held from 1 to 3 December 2005 at Werfenweng in Austria. Fifty young people from the Belluno, South Tyrol and Aosta Valley regions in Italy and from Pongau, Austria, Freiburg in Germany and the Isère in France discussed innovative transport solutions. This event was the prelude to the young people's involvement in the Alpine Awareness project as part of the Interreg IIIB Alpine Space Programme.

In the future, these young people will work in project groups looking at sustainable transport models that they themselves create in conjunction with various partners, such as transport companies and driving schools. For example, one project is looking at a new format for learning to drive. Working with a driving school, the young people are setting up a learning programme based on communicating the practical skills required to drive a car and information about the environmental effects of road traffic. Another project has established "pedestrian communities" to make the walk to school together.

Source and additional information: <http://www.alpineawareness.net>

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this handbook

ALLIER Charlotte, Haute-Savoie Junior, coordinator
AUDRECHY Delphine, coopérative Oxalis
BARDAGI Thierry, mountain leader, "Park ambassador"
BERNARD Fabienne, Parc national de la Vanoise
BERTANO Cédric, indépendant, mountain leader
BERTHELOT Libéra, Evaluation officer for Via Alpina and GTA
BOISSEAU Juliette, CDT 05
BRAND Claude, Institut de la montagne, Chambéry
BROCHIER Gilles, USEP 05, Delegate
BUISSON Laurent, DIACT Grenoble, Mountains officer
CALMELS Patricia, Espace Mont-Blanc - Asters, Environmental education officer
CALVET Claire, Parc national des Ecrins, Leader+ officer
CINQUIN Serge, indépendant, mountain leader trainee
COLLINET Laurent, ADT Haute-Savoie (deceased)
DARPHEUIL Christophe, Association Naturama, Rhône
DAVIN Laurence, Mountain Riders, Relais 05
DEVOUGE Magali, CRT PACA
FAURE Muriel, Sentinelles des Alpes / MDP
FRANCESCHI Virginie, mountain leader
FRIBOURG Xavier and CARRAUD Adrien, Comité bassin d'emploi Barcelonnette / association Even'Ubaye
GIUNTA Roberto, Coop Habitat, Val d'Aoste
GOURDOU Bernard, mountain leader, accommodation manager
GSTALDER Robert, CAF Monaco / Via Alpina Monaco
HARBRETEAU Manuel and PIERRON Marie, CRT Riviera-Côte d'Azur
HEMERAY Damien, park ranger, Parc national de la Vanoise, Bonneval-sur-Arc
HOAREAU Bernard, FFRP Rhône-Alpes
HUGUET Nicolas, Bourjot Environnement, Mountain huts officer
ISSELIN Frédéric, association Oxalis-Bauges
JEZEQUEL Pierre, UCPA, Alps officer
JOLYET Marie, PNR Queyras, intern
JOUBERT Annie, CG 05, Hiking officer
LABROSSE Claudie, FFCAM, Montagnes de la Terre manager, Les Vigneaux
LAMBERT Thomas, ASADAC, studies officer
LEBIODA Brigitte, Ligue de l'enseignement – ADELHA, EEDD manager
MALBEC Malvina, CPIE Vaucluse, Nature instructor, mountain leader
MARAIS Maurice, région Paca, Mountains officer, Briançon
MATHIEU Elise, OT Pays des Ecrins, assistant manager
MATHIEU Gwladys and DELESTRADE Anne, Centre de recherches sur les écosystèmes d'altitude (CREA)
MAZURE Anne-Sophie, Bourjot Environnement, Interreg IIIA officer
MEEUS Guido, Parc national de la Vanoise, mission Education à l'environnement
Agnès MONTESINOS, PNR Queyras, Tourism officer
NAFTEUR Olivia, En Passant Par la Montagne, manager
NICOLAS Bernard, officer, Direction des études et de l'aménagement touristique de la montagne (DEATM), Gap
PANCHAUD François, Asters, instructor
PEISSER Carine, Calc'ere, mountain leader
PICHON Jérémie, Mountain Riders, coordinator
PIEILLER Daniele, refuge de Crête Sèche
PIERRE Elisabeth, mountain leader
POZZI Tiziana e Marco, refuge Levi Molinari (Piémont)
REVERET Christophe, Versant Sud Consultant
RITTER Jean, université Franche-Comté
ROUX Isabelle, REE05 and REEMA coordinator
RUTTEN Céline, park ranger, Parc national de la Vanoise, Pralognan
TROTIER Anthony, L'Edelweiss, instructor, mountain leader trainee
VIALON Lionel, UCPA, Youth officer
VUILLERME Gilles, Education nationale, teacher and mountain leader
ZINGARI Valentina, ethnologue